

# **An Assessment of the Components of an Effective Monitoring and Evaluation System in Local NGOs: A Case Study of Earthchild Project**

by  
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## **DECLARATION**

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own original work, that I am the authorship owner thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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## ABSTRACT

This research study is primarily motivated by the need to provide continuous and systematic information about the institutionalisation of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems within the context of non-governmental organisations implementing social programmes. An effective M&E system has become a mechanism that organisations can use to improve their projects and accountability. However, studies have revealed that, while effective M&E systems are successfully developed, not all of these are implemented. In addition, when some of these systems are utilised, they are only partially implemented. One reason cited is the complexity of M&E systems, making implementation difficult.

This study seeks to investigate the components that make an effective M&E system and to use these components to assess the use of M&E in a local non-governmental organisation (NGO). The main objectives are to examine what constitutes an effective M&E system and highlight its key components; present a conceptual framework that will serve as a useful diagnostic aid; document M&E systems currently adopted by selected NGOs, both locally and internationally; analyse the M&E system and institutionalisation practices of a selected case study against the developed conceptual framework; and, lastly, to offer recommendations for more effective institutionalisation of M&E practices in the selected case study based on the practices of other NGOs.

A case study approach followed by a qualitative method approach was employed to analyse the implementation of the M&E systems in the NGO of Earthchild Project (ECP), which is based in Muizenberg, Cape Town in the Western Cape province of South Africa. Semi-structured questionnaires administered through interviews were used to collect primary data. Key informants were purposefully selected for the study. Content analysis was also employed to better understand the case study.

The findings of the research study reveal that the institutionalisation of effective M&E systems is comprised of components that include purpose and scope, critical reflection events and processes, human resources, documentation, capacitation and motivation of staff, as well as commitment by management to generate and use M&E information. The study found that Earthchild Project has no formal M&E unit or M&E practitioners.

It further notes supervision problems resulting predominantly from the absence of M&E guidelines to inform the implementation of M&E, as well as the absence of clear roles, responsibilities and processes for reporting on Earthchild Project activities.

Based on the study findings, key recommendations are to develop an M&E plan and to properly document all aspects of the ECP M&E system. In addition, the NGO should develop an M&E budget that will assist in alleviating the current shortage of M&E human resources and skills; provide capacity building and training to the project staff undertaking M&E responsibilities; and encourage participation of all stakeholders. For management, it is recommended that a supportive evaluation culture be built that encourages learning and critical reflection, that stakeholder participation and engagement be supported and stakeholder's feedback be incorporate into the organisation's broader decision-making processes.

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I thank Earthchild Project for granting me the opportunity to undertake this study. I appreciate the valuable time and experience shared with me. You have contributed greatly to the completion of my degree. Thank you and God bless.

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated first and foremost to myself. I never in a million years expected that I would arrive at this juncture of my life. I appreciate my mother for all her love, patience and support. I also would like to make a special dedication to my late father, Peter Ramorwa, and late grandmother, Ntoi Ramorwa, thank you for looking down on me from heaven.

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## LIST OF KEY TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NDP	National Development Plan
NEP	National Evaluation Plan
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Cooperation
PSC	Public Service Commission
RBM	Results-Based Monitoring
SAMEA	South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNWFP	United Nations World Food Programme
UNFDP	United Nations Population Funds
WHO	World Health Organization

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has become a global commonsensical practice across organisations – including in NGOs and governments. Over the last several decades, monitoring and evaluation has been observed as fundamental to the improvement of project planning, management and implementation. It has become an integral part in the implementation of projects and part and parcel of project design and good management practice. According to the UNDP (2002:6), the overall aim of monitoring and evaluation is to measure and assess the performance of projects in order to ensure the effective management of outcomes and outputs, otherwise known as development results. In light of this, building monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems has become a widespread requirement as there is growing pressure on organisations to improve their performance and effective use of funds, as well as the impact and benefits emerging from their projects (Wanjiru 2015:2).

Globally, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has become central to the development activities of NGOs (Mueller-Hirth, 2012). The relative scarcity of development funds has also increased the pressure on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to employ results-based monitoring and evaluation systems that will effectively enable them to demonstrate accountability and results.

To illustrate the growing importance of M&E in the activities and administration of NGOs, significant amounts of financial and human resources have been allocated to M&E-related activities. In some cases, for example the United States Agency of International Development (USAID) grants in South Africa, resources allocated to M&E make up to nine percent of total project expenditure. Other grant makers might not specify a percentage to be spent on M&E but instead put systems in place for reporting that often demand considerable NGO resources. Furthermore, most funders require evidence of effective monitoring and evaluation systems prior to awarding funds.

Effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are considered cornerstones and preconditions for the fulfilment of organisational strategies that strengthen results-

based management and put in place a culture of measuring results, using results to inform decision-making, improving measurability to ensure accountability of results and strengthening M&E systems. As highlighted by the UNDP (2009), without these effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, it is not possible to assess whether work is going in its intended direction, affirm progress and success and decide how future efforts can be enhanced.

Gaining an understanding of effective monitoring and evaluation systems has been a challenge. According to Engela and Ajam (2010), “monitoring and evaluation, although very essential in improving performance, is also very complex, multidisciplinary and involves skill intensive processes”. Some writers revealed that while effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are successfully developed, not all are implemented and, even when they are implemented, they are sometimes partially implemented (Groene and Branda 2006, 298). Further cited by Mahmood et al (2010) “*the complexity of M&E systems is one other difficulty experienced during the implementation process of M&E*”. In some cases, improper operationalisation of outcomes makes it impossible to measure what is intended to be measured (Groene & Branda, 2006:299). Babbie and Mouton (2001:342), when looking at dimensions of programme management and implementation, cite issues of competences and abilities of personnel who manage the implementation; the organisational structures available to create an enabling environment for the discharge of M&E duties; personality styles; and attitudes of implementation staff (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:344).

The aforementioned suggests a poor understanding of the overall ingredients of an effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system within the context of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The inadequate empirical information about the landscape of M&E in NGOs is often overlooked as a major constraint in the development of effective interventions to strengthen the M&E systems. To address this gap in knowledge, the study will first document and analyse M&E systems in an effort to capture best practises of NGOs in both local (South Africa) and international contexts so as to inform M&E frameworks and practices. This is critical knowledge needed to holistically conceptualise the M&E phenomenon.

Studies on the implementation of M&E systems within the context of local non-governmental organisations at grassroots level are quite limited. However, there is

literature on various aspects, factors and dimensions of M&E systems. Many studies have been undertaken on M&E frameworks, but most focus on the content of the M&E systems, such as the M&E plan (framework) and individual tools, rather than on both internal and external consideration that an M&E system needs to function effectively.

It is against this backdrop that this study aims to explore M&E systems, focusing on the essential element of effectiveness. The research will conduct a comparative analysis of the implementation of effective monitoring and evaluation systems by comparing practices adopted in both international and local NGOs in order to draw from their lessons and experiences and thus offer recommendations to other NGOs.

## **1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES**

There is relatively limited available knowledge on the practises of monitoring and evaluation systems and the related challenges on projects executed by NGOs (Tulema, 2014:12). Available research suggests that there are gaps and challenges in the effective realisation of M&E practices in NGOs, yet this is a critical practice upon which project success is highly dependent (Chibonore, 2015:4). Inadequate empirical information about the landscape of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in NGOs is a major constraint in the development of effective interventions to strengthen M&E systems and is in part a symptom of their capacity constraints. Research that fills the gap by recording the M&E practises adopted by NGOs could help others to use their limited capacity optimally. Thus, the purpose of this study is to contribute to bridging the gap in existing knowledge by documenting and presenting M&E systems adopted by NGOs. Unlike many studies that often focus on international NGOs operating in Africa as opposed to South African organisations (Mueller-Hirth, 2012:655), this research aims to capture mini-case studies of both local and international NGOs.

The research objectives set for the study are as follows:

1. To examine what constitutes an effective M&E system and highlight key components;
2. To present a conceptual framework that serves as a useful diagnostic aid;
3. To document M&E systems currently adopted by selected NGOs, both locally and internationally;



4. To analyse the M&E system and institutionalisation practices of a selected case study against the developed conceptual framework; and
5. To offer recommendations for more effective institutionalisation of M&E practices in the selected case study based on the practices of other NGOs.

The study hopes to inform and help development actors (NGOs, public and private organisations, project managers and donor agencies) to gain deeper insight of M&E systems and how they can improve the design and implementation of M&E systems in order to meet the expectations of stakeholders.

### **1.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

According to Burns and Grove (2003:195), a research design is a plan according to which information is gathered by having control over conditions that may interfere with the credibility of findings. Parahoo (1997:42) defines a research design as a blueprint that informs the manner, method and condition in which data is to be collected and analysed. Polit, et al. (2001:167) describes a research design as “the researcher’s overall plan for answering the research question or testing the research hypothesis”. Research methodology, as stated by Webb and Auriacombe (2006:589) and Mouton (1996:108), refers to the process of using of mixture of methods, techniques and procedures to implement a research design.

Given the lack of empirical research recording current practices of M&E systems within the NGO sector, the research follows an exploratory and descriptive approach. Chapter 4 details the research method and activities. The research employs a case study methodology that provides a methodological structure for a detailed examination and documentation of the M&E systems used by NGO both locally and internationally. According to Fonkem (2012), “a case study is a method of studying in-depth a social phenomenon by systematically analysing a single case in point such as a person, family, group, community, village, society, process, system, an organisation, an institution or any other unit of social life.” Welman, et al. (2005:25) state that a case study is generally used for intensive exploration of dynamic bounded systems known to typically be social in nature, which in this study is an institute or practise.

The study primarily used qualitative data collection strategies, although when appropriate quantitative data was collected. The study's sources of data include:

- Documentary evidence of M&E system of local and international NGOs; and
- Interviews with key informants of the selected NGOs used for assessment.

The study includes a review of relevant literature and a document analysis. According to Mouton (2001), "a literature review requires the researcher to review appropriate literature to be able to determine relevant information and debates surrounding the topic and helps avoid duplication". Kumar et al (2005:30) states that conducting a literature review enables a researcher to gain a broad knowledge base in the research area. Subsequently, enabling the researcher to better clarify and focus the research problem, improve methodology and analyse and interpret findings adds value and credibility to the research. At the outset of the study, Chapter 2 introduces a conceptual model of components of an effective M&E system and provides evidence for it from the literature. The conceptual model guides the research and serves as an analytical tool to examine the main case study.

The study uses Purposive sampling, which according to Welman et al (2005; 69) "is one of the most fundamental type of non-probability sampling. Burger & Silima (2006: 656) pointed out that purposive sampling is often the most suitable when embarking on a qualitative studies. According to Maree & Pieterse (2007:178), Morra Ima & Rist (2009: 272), this sampling method is to be used when having a specific purpose in mind. For the purpose of the study, this kind of sampling was used to choose the mini-case studies to document and also to choose key informants that are the most suitable to provide the information required for the study.

Given the qualitative approach of this study, data collection is accomplished through recording interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, observations and focus group discussions, which will be interpreted and analysed. Decision makers and project/programme managers at various operational levels are interviewed using the semi-structured questionnaires. These types of questionnaires enable the researcher to probe further in order to gather more information into an area of interest According Jarbandhan and De Wet (2006:676), "semi-structured questionnaires contain partly structured and unstructured questions which gives a respondent some freedom to

respond openly. This allows for in-depth interviews and probing in order to get more information from the respondents". The objective of conducting interviews in this study is to establish the M&E system in use, as well as practice, procedures and implementation problems that may require solutions.

For the purpose of this study, non-probability and purposive sampling is adopted. According to Parahoo (1997:223), non-probability sampling is based on the researcher's judgment in the selection of participants and their knowledge on the subject matter. Parahoo (1997:232) describes purposive sampling as "a method of sampling where the researcher deliberately chooses who to include in the study based on their ability to provide necessary data". The purpose of this approach is to seek information about a programme's, project managers, or monitoring and evaluation practitioner's opinion on the M&E systems in place, on which informants would have information relevant to the study, by virtue of their experience.

As noted in the above discussion, a qualitative set of data was collected. Responses from the interviews, as well as notes and records from observation and focus group discussions were identified and clustered into meaningful groups, related themes, patterns and categories in order to answer the different research questions under investigation. A thematic approach is thus followed to assess the field work results. Data is presented in the form of narrative analysis.

As will be highlighted more fully in Chapter 4, a series of ethical decisions was made before the collection of data commenced. It is necessary to preliminarily note that necessary written permission was sought from the case study NGO to conduct the research and approval was required before data collection commenced. An outline of the chapters for the study is described below.

## **1.4 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

The chapter outline is in line with the research objectives of this study.

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter provides an introduction and background to the study. In addition, it provides the problem statement, research question, aims and objectives, as well as outlines the chosen design and research methodology.

Chapter 2: Literature review and conceptual framework. This chapter presents the literature reviewed on the selected relevant studies. The literature review defines effective M&E systems depicting the characteristics and factors affecting effective M&E. It further discusses critical components of an effective M&E system and concludes with a conceptual framework of an effective M&E system.

Chapter 3: Comparative analysis of multiple case studies. This chapter first presents cases studies, and describes the M&E systems adopted by these NGOs. This is used to assess the M&E system of the selected case study.

Chapter 4. Research methodology. This chapter describes the selected research techniques for data collection, as well as the research design for the study.

Chapter 5: The case study and field work results. This chapter describes the case study area and provides fieldwork results of the assessment of the M&E systems of NGOs implementing programmes.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations. This last and final chapter develops lessons of experience and areas of future study and also provides conclusions and recommendations for the study.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE COMPOSITION OF EFFECTIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the literature review of internal and external considerations of M&E systems. It conceptualises the main M&E concepts and terminology, objectives of M&E and the shift towards M&E for results. This is followed by a discussion on the design of effective M&E systems, highlighting and elaborating on the key elements. The chapter further identifies and describes enabling environmental factors of an effective M&E system. In addition, the chapter details common problems that hinder M&E systems and briefly discusses major points highlighted in the previous sections.

### **2.2 MONITORING AND EVALUATION CONCEPTS AND CONSIDERATIONS**

This section provides an overview of alternative M&E definitions, purposes and describes the link between M&E and results-based management.

#### **2.2.1 Monitoring and Evaluation**

Authors describe monitoring and evaluation in several different ways, usually as a consequence of diverse theoretical and tactical approaches to the exercise of evaluation. Most literature defines monitoring and evaluation as two distinct yet complementary activities (Gorgens & Kusek, 2009). Monitoring is the routine collection and analysis of information to track progress against set plans and check compliance with established standards. It helps identify trends and patterns, adapt strategies and inform decisions for project/programme management (IFRC, 2011:11). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines monitoring as a continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and the

achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds (Kusek & Rist, 2004:12).

Evaluation, on the other hand, is defined “as systematic and objective as possible, of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results” (IFRC, 2011:11). Save the Children (1995:99) defines evaluation as assessing “whether the objectives of the piece of work have been achieved, and whether it has made an impact”. This focus is emphasised by Wholey, et al. and Perry in Cloete, Wissink and De Coning (2006:247): “programme evaluation consists of the systematic description and judgements of programmes and, to the extent feasible, systematic assessment of the extent to which they have the intended results”.

In essence, these two activities involve the systematic and continuous collecting and analysing of information on the progress of either an ongoing or completed project or comparison of project intent versus outcome/impact (Hunter, 2009). In Table 1, below, the definitions of M&E illustrate the complementary nature of monitoring and evaluation in M&E systems.

**Table 1: A demonstration of the complementary nature of monitoring and evaluation**

<b>MONITORING</b>	<b>EVALUATION</b>
Clarifies programme objectives.	Analyses why intended results were or were not achieved.
Links activities and their resources to objectives.	Assesses specific causal contributions of activities to results.
Translates objectives into performance indicators and sets targets.	Examines implementation process.
Routinely collects data on these indicators, compares actual results with targets.	Explores unintended results.
Reports progress to managers and alerts them to problems.	Provides lessons, highlights significant accomplishments or programme potential and offers recommendations for improvement.

**Source:** Kusek and Rist (2001:14).

In addition to the above, it is worth mentioning that monitoring collects basic information over time using constant methods, while evaluation analyses information in depth, using various methods to make a judgement on the merit of the evaluand.

### 2.2.2 Purpose of Monitoring and Evaluation

The World Bank (2004:5) notes the purpose of M&E as providing government officials, managers and civil society with better means for learning from past experience, improving service delivery, planning and allocating resources and demonstrating results as part of accountability. Mosse and Sontheimer (2006:3) assert that the purpose of M&E is to provide decision-makers with feedback on results and progress to inform strategic planning and resource allocation decisions, corrective decisions, accountability in terms of results for programme marketing and public relations, quality management, benchmarking and improvement (Mosse & Sontheimer, 2006:3).

Atkinson and Wellman (2003:3) and the OECD (2007:12) concur with the corrective aspect, in such that M&E aims to help identify and correct mistakes and build on the successes of best practice, thereby contributing to “continued improvements in the design and administration of programmes” (Atkinson & Wellman 2003:3; OECD 2007:12). According to UNICEF (2003), two primary purposes of monitoring and evaluation are drawing lessons for stakeholders’ learning and holding management accountable. The two purposes are in most instances posed in opposition. Dialogue and participation are necessary for consensus building but independent external evaluation is the best option for accountability.

A further objective of M&E is to determine whether the project is implemented efficiently and reaches the intended beneficiaries (Valadez & Bamberger, 1994:7). Frankel & Gage (2007) identifies M&E as a fundamental process that produces information to make informed decisions regarding operations management and service delivery, including effective and efficient use of resources, to determine the extent to which the programme/project is on track and to make any needed corrections accordingly and evaluate the extent to which the programme/project is having or has had the desired impact.

An important objective identified by the OECD is “to make informed decisions about the allocation of funds” (OECD, 2007:12). Although the measurement of efficiency (the ratio between outcomes and the costs) is a critical objective of M&E, the OECD warns that “such analyses are difficult to undertake ... [as there are] many factors that can influence efficiency at any time: the impact of the initiative will obviously vary depending on whether the economic context is favourable.”

Lastly, M&E should assess the impact on wider developmental objectives (Valadez & Bamberger, 1994:7; OECD 2007:12). It should provide answers to: “are the desired goals and benefits achieved?” and “is the cost reasonable in relation to its effectiveness and benefits?” (Rossi, et al., 2004:3). It can also help to identify unintended programme or project results.

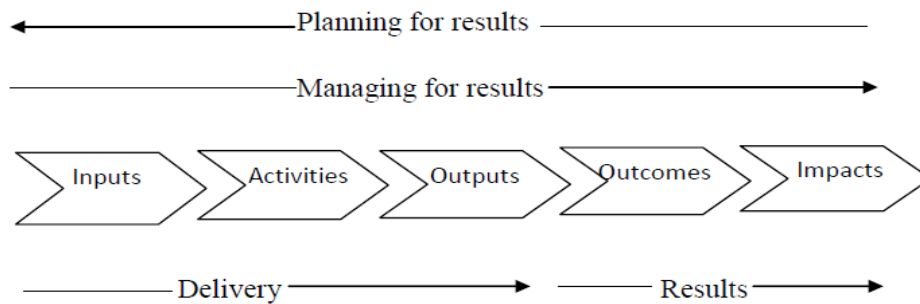
### **2.2.3 Results-Based Management**

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a critical part of results-based management (henceforth referred to as RBM). It forms the basis for clear and accurate reporting on the results achieved by an intervention (project or programme). RBM is defined as an approach to project/programme management based on clearly defined results, and the methodologies and tools to measure and achieve them (IFRC, 2011:9). Ortiz et al (2004:2) describe it as “a management approach focused on achieving results; a broad management strategy aimed at changing the way agencies operate, with improving performance (achieving results) as the central orientation”.

In the United Nations Population Fund (UNFDP) (2013:7), RBM is defined as a “management strategy by which all actors on the ground, contributing directly or indirectly to achieving a set of development results, ensure that their processes, products and services contribute to the achievement of desired results (outputs, outcomes and goals)”. This indicates that RBM rests on clearly defining accountability for results and requires monitoring and self-assessment of progress towards results, including reporting on performance.

According to Spreckley (2009:3), RBM is a fairly new concept that differs from previously used methods regarding project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It is “a shift from focusing on the inputs and activities (the resources and procedures) to focusing on the outputs, outcomes, impact and the need for sustainable benefits (the results of what you do)”. RBM functions differently to the traditional project planning process as it starts by focusing on the desired impact of the project and works backwards to the anticipated outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs. This is done through the application of a ‘results chain’, which is a procedure for guiding implementation sequentially (UNWFP, 2015).



**Figure 1: Results-based management results chain**

Source: Spreckley (2009:3)

The challenge with this method is the measuring of impact and outcome by organisations such as NPOs. This method suggests that an impact assessment be conducted as part of the evaluation process.

According to the Spreckley (2009:7) in terms of RBM, monitoring and evaluation involves:

- Clearly identifying programme/project beneficiaries', and other stakeholders', problems and opportunities;
- Setting clear and agreed upon objectives, and monitoring targets and milestones;
- Ensuring adequate resources to achieve objectives;
- Monitoring progress towards results and resources consumed with the use of appropriate indicators;
- Identifying and managing assumptions/risks, while bearing in mind expected results and necessary resources;
- Using quantifiable indicators and qualitative narratives to measure progress;
- Increasing knowledge by learning lessons and integrating them into decisions;
- Changing objectives as a consequence of learned lessons; and
- Reporting on results achieved and the resources involved.

Within the RBM process, M&E is designed and plotted simultaneously with the actual project design and planning so as to ensure that all important elements that are included are directly linked to the project (UNWFP, 2015; Necesito, et al., 2010). This

helps to ensure that sufficient budgeting and accountability systems are put in place for M&E processes to ensure that project monitoring and assessment of impacts are conducted effectively.

## **2.3 DEFINING MONITORING AND EVALUATION AS A SYSTEM**

Monitoring and evaluation systems mean different things to different people – there is no standard definition and some prefer the term ‘M&E framework or approaches’ (Simister 2009). In this light, an M&E system is largely gleaned as consisting of processes that inform data collection, analysis and use of data (Frankel & Gage, 2007; Gosling & Save the Children, 2003:96; FHI, 360(2013). The European Commission Civil Society Fund in Ethiopia (2017:8) defines an M&E system as a set of organised planning, information gathering and synthesis, reflection and reporting processes, along with the necessary supporting conditions and capacities required for the outputs of M&E to make a valuable contribution to decision making and learning. This definition highlights critical elements in the setting up an M&E system, which will be discussed later.

On the other hand, Mtshali (2015:22) states that an M&E system can be largely defined as a collection of components or parts that are organised around a common purpose or goal (Save the Children, 2009; UNICEF, 2009). In the context of M&E, it is therefore important to understand the linkages between the elements of a system by first identifying those elements or components. The common purpose is critical to how one defines the system’s structures and functions needed to meet the purpose (Wulczyn, Daro, Fluke, Feldman, Glodek & Lifanda, 2010:10-12).

The M&E Guide by the International Fund for Agriculture Development (2002:3) states that a well-functioning M&E system manages to integrate the more formal, data-oriented side commonly associated with the task of M&E together with informal monitoring and communication. Therefore, if defining an M&E system as an integrated system of reflection and communication supporting project implementation it is possible to plan for and manage the system over the entire lifecycle of the project. However, M&E is often seen as a statistical task or tedious external obligation of little relevance to those implementing a project.

Seeing M&E as an integrated support to those involved in project implementation requires the following:

- Creating M&E processes that lead to clear and regular learning for all those involved in the project strategy and operations;
- Understanding the links between M&E and management functions;
- Using existing processes of learning, communication and decision-making among stakeholders as the basis for project-oriented M&E; and
- Putting in place necessary conditions and capacities for M&E to be carried out.

Furthermore, for M&E to be effective, the following four core tasks need to be fulfilled:

1. Designing and setting up the system;
2. Gathering and managing information;
3. Reflecting critically to improve action; and
4. Communicating and reporting results.

(IFRC, 2011:3).

The steps in designing the M&E system will be discussed in-depth later in the chapter.

### **2.3.1 Importance of the Monitoring and Evaluation System**

According to MDF (2011), many organisations formally or informally develop and use their information system for monitoring and evaluation purposes, and call it an M&E system. The activities are based on planning and are separate exercises. Through monitoring activities, the organisation keeps track of the progress of the intervention. Evaluation exercises focus more on an assessment of the intervention as per the set evaluation criteria.

M&E systems are mostly designed in such a way that they focus on processing monitoring data and leave room for uploading the evaluation reports. The system should be enabled to track verifiable data and translate this into valuable management information. Accessibility and transparency are key for a system to promote the sharing and exchanging of experiences and lessons learned in order for decision makers to translate these into corrective actions. An M&E system is a collection of

people, procedures, technology and data that effectively interact to make timely information available for all authorised decision-makers.

An M&E system can be defined as a description of the main questions and objectives that are to be addressed or attained through monitoring and evaluation efforts, as well as a detailed description of the key aspects to be monitored and evaluated, including measurement indicators, processes for data collection and verification, delegation of responsibilities, and prescriptions and deadlines for reporting of the results. Kusek and Rist (2004) state that M&E systems should provide answers to the following questions:

- Have policies, programs and projects led to the desired results and outcomes?
- How do we know we are on the right track?
- How do we know if there are problems along the way?
- How can we correct them at any given point in time?
- How do we measure progress?
- How can we tell success from failure?

(Kusek & Rist 2004:3)

M&E systems can contribute to answering the above questions. As such, it is important to properly design an M&E system so as to obtain reliable and credible information that will inform, for instance, the question of “how do we know we are on the right track?” The following section discusses the steps in designing an M&E system.

## **2.4 DESIGNING OF AN EFFECTIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM**

There is no blueprint for designing M&E systems that suit every situation (Kusek & Rist, 2004:2). As such, it is imperative for sector agencies to design M&E systems in a manner that meets their demands, needs and capacities. The Guide on Monitoring, Evaluation issued by ADRA International Food Security Department (2007:36) suggests the following six steps when designing an effective M&E system:

1. Establishing the purpose and scope of the M&E system – Why do we need M&E and how comprehensive should the M&E system be?

2. Identifying performance questions, information needs and indicators – What do we need to know in order to monitor and evaluate the project so that it can be managed effectively?
3. Planning information gathering and organisation – How will the required information be gathered and organised?
4. Planning the critical reflection process and events – How will we make sense of the outcome of the information gathered and how will it be used to make improvements in project implementation?
5. Planning for quality communication and reporting – How and to whom do we want to communicate project results? What project activities and processes do we need to communicate?
6. Planning for the necessary conditions and capacities – What resources and capacity do we need to ensure that our M&E system works effectively?

These steps help to ensure that M&E is a relevant guide for a project intervention strategy for all key stakeholders. In this way, the M&E can contribute directly to the measuring of the impact within the context of a problem-based and impact-driven research agenda.

#### **2.4.1 Establishing the Purpose and Scope of the Monitoring and Evaluation System**

When designing an M&E system, it is important to have a clear distinction and definition of the purpose and scope – establishing what the system is and what it is for (Simister, 2009:2). A definition of the purpose and scope of the intended M&E system helps to define the number of indicators to track, information need, budget level, information type (quantitative, qualitative or both), frequency and tools needed. The Guide to Project M&E by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (2001:4-10) contains a formulation process of the M&E purpose that provides answers to the following question:

*What are the main reasons to set up and implement M&E, for us – as implementing partners and primary stakeholders – and for other key stakeholders?*

It is important to be as clear as possible about the primary overall purpose of the M&E system, whilst acknowledging that people at different levels of an organisation might make different and competing demands on the system in order to balance requirements, such as learning; improving performance; accountability upwards to donors, governments and supporters; accountability downwards to partners and service users; providing evidence for advocacy work; basic project and programme management; supervision and control; resource allocation; public relations; and marketing and fundraising. It is also vital to be clear about the bottom line. There are almost always some aspects of an M&E system that are set in stone or cannot be easily altered as they serve the needs of external organisations over which there may be no influence. It is important to clarify this as early as possible as it will restrict the range of available options (Simister, 2009:2).

With a shared understanding of the overall purpose, the next step is to clarify the scope of the M&E systems. “Scope” relates to the sophistication of the system. M&E systems can be highly sophisticated, requiring considerable expertise in qualitative and quantitative methods and extensive information management. They can also be very simple systems that rely largely on extensive information management and can contain very simple amounts of data (IFAD, 2009:10).

These different systems will not yield the same results. Each has specific advantages and disadvantages and the M&E system that is appropriate to each situation will depend on the M&E purpose, available resources and M&E expertise. It is important to define the scope of M&E systems by asking:

- What level of funding is potentially available?
- What level of participation by primary stakeholders and partner organisations is desirable and feasible in M&E?
- How detailed does the M&E information have to be, either in terms of quantitative or qualitative data?

- What sort of baseline study is desirable and feasible?
- What are the current M&E capacities among primary stakeholders and partner organisations and how does this affect the desired levels of M&E?

(IFAD, 2009:4-11)

#### **2.4.2 Identifying Performance Questions, Information Needs and Indicators**

The most common approach when setting up an M &E system is to ask the question: “What do we need to know in order to monitor and evaluate the project so that it can be managed effectively?” (Gesongo, 2014:3). Performance questions are not just about ‘what’ has been achieved. They also ask ‘why’ there is success or failure and what has been learned to improve future actions (IFAD, 2009:11) answering these questions requires descriptive analysis and quantitative information. Identifying performance questions make it easier to recognise specific essential indicators. At times a performance question can be answered directly with a simple quantitative indicator. However, very often the question can only be answered with a range of qualitative and quantitative information.

The focus of monitoring and evaluation should be on information that users need and, in so doing, should answer the following questions:

- Who are the key stakeholders?
- What information do they need to effectively participate in the initiative?

(Gesongo, 2014:3)

Less information of good quality is more useful than lots of inaccurate/useless information. It is important to understand how beneficiaries will judge if the project is working well. It should also always be asked how the information will be used.

Indicators are important monitoring mechanisms for assessing the progress of a plan. Indicators can be outputs (the tangible products produced from activities) or impact indicators (measurements of change in situations or groups). Indicators need to be:

- Independent: they measure only the objective, purpose or result to which they are linked.

- Factual: they are based on factual measurement.
- Plausible: it must be believable that they are measuring the change attributed to the project.
- Objectively verifiable: one must be able to verify whether they have been achieved.

(European Commission Civil Society Fund, 2017:10-11)

### **2.4.3 Planning Information Gathering and Organisation**

Once the project's or programme's information needs are defined, the next step is to plan for the reliable collection and management of data so it can be efficiently analysed and used as information. Gathering and organising information generally describes methods to enable resource allocation. It asks questions such as "how will we collect, collate, analyse, record and store data" and "who should be involved". Lastly, it describes methods for data collection, synthesis, analysis and recording. These are dependent on a number of factors, including the purpose and scope of the M&E system, availability and reliable data from other sources and the feasibility, appropriateness, reliability, sensitivity and cost-effectiveness with timeliness (IFAD, 2002:12).

In addition, planning for data collection includes the following steps to be considered:

- Develop an M&E plan;
- Assess the availability of secondary data;
- Determine the balance of quantitative and qualitative data;
- Triangulate data-collection sources and methods;
- Determine sampling requirements;
- Prepare for any surveys;
- Prepare specific data-collection methods/tools;
- Establish stakeholder complaints and feedback mechanisms; and
- Establish project/programme staff/volunteer review mechanisms.

(IFRC, 2011:32-47)



Complementary to data collection is the development of a data analysis plan, which entails converting collected data into usable information. This is a critical step of the M&E planning process as it shapes the information that is reported and its potential use. It is a continuous process throughout the project/programme cycle to make sense of gathered data to inform ongoing and future programming (IFRC, 2011:48).

#### **2.4.4 Plan Critical Reflection Processes and Events**

Critical reflection involves deciding from the onset how the initiative will make sense of the information gathered and use it to make improvements (Gesongo, 2014:3). This can be done through critical reflection events, such as annual stakeholders' review and planning workshops. Critical reflection can occur formally and informally. "Formally, it can be facilitation during project meetings, workshops with partners and primary stakeholders or a part of external evaluations. Informally, it can occur in ongoing discussion between project stakeholders". IFAD (2014:4-13) outlines some common reflection events that occur during the life of most projects and how these complement each other.

**Table 2: Example of a critical reflection schedule for a project**

Note: This is a project-centric list. Primary stakeholders will have their own schedule of events, as will each of the implementing partners. The art of participatory M&E is to link these different schedules for shared learning.

<i>Critical Reflection Processes or Events</i>	<i>Purpose and Description</i>	<i>Whom to Involve</i>	<i>Timing</i>
<i>Participatory review of project strategy</i>	Update the situation analysis, revise problems/visions, adjust objective hierarchy and assumptions	Representatives of intended primary stakeholders, staff of participant organisation, all project staff, facilitator	Three-day workshop at start-up
<i>Development of M&amp;E plan with stakeholders</i>	Assess different information needs, take stock of who is already doing what, agree on priority information areas, refine questions/indicators, decide on methods, agree on responsibilities	Representatives of intended primary stakeholders, staff of participant organisation, all project staff, facilitator	Four or five full-day meetings during the first six months of the project
<i>Quarterly progress reviews by PMU staff</i>	Discussion of key successes and problems	Senior staff of PMU and partner organisation	One-day meeting every three months
<i>Field visits</i>	Firsthand look at what is happening in the field, informal chats about how activities are being implemented	Field staff, supervisors of field staff, project director	Weekly visit for field staff, monthly for the project director
<i>Annual project review</i>	Summary of key successes and problems, ideas for changing project activities/outputs and assumptions, review of implications for the project logframe, identification of lessons learned about project implementation, M&E system adjustment	Representatives of intended primary stakeholders, staff of implementing partners, all project staff, facilitator	Once a year
<i>Periodic review workshops of key project components</i>	Focused discussion about the strategy and operations of key components to adjust the objective hierarchy, solve problems and identify lessons learned	Key stakeholders of the project component: intended primary stakeholders, implementing partners, field and senior project staff	Once a year in the first two years; after that, once every two years
<i>Preparation for supervision missions</i>	Explain the mission purpose, agree on what the project and stakeholders would like to get out of the mission, identify who needs to prepare what before the mission, organise the logistics	Small group of primary stakeholder representatives, senior staff of the participant organisation, senior project staff	One month prior to the supervision mission

Source: ADRA International (2007)

During this component, systematically planning time for reflection and analysis will help ensure that data is transformed into valuable knowledge. By doing this, project management decisions will likely build on lessons learned as the project progresses. Likewise, the M&E working group can plan routine reflection events in order to validate project information coming from observations, data monitoring and project visits. They can then analyse the findings and use these to inform project decision-making. Critical reflection events should be held frequently during project implementation. Regular project review meetings can be held monthly, quarterly, semi-annually or as deemed necessary by the project. Periodic events may be scheduled, such as a learning review following a major lessons-learned workshop after a project evaluation. Formal critical reflection and milestone reviews can occur at meetings of the Project Management

Unit or Senior Management Group where a decision can be made to proceed or not, or to scale up the project (ADRA International, 2007).

#### **2.4.5 Plan for Quality Communication and Reporting**

The underlying principle of communicating and reporting results is to know one's audience, refer to the information needs of the different stakeholders and remember to include accountability, advocacy and action-oriented audiences (Gesongo, 2014:3). According to the M&E Guide by ADRA International Food Security Department (2007:36), the reporting and communication plan should contain:

- A list of all key audiences, their information requirements, when they need this information and the format in which they need it.
- A comprehensive schedule for information production, showing who will do what and by when.
- A definition of what is to be done with the information (whether it is simply for onward transmission, for analytical discussion, etc.).

Reporting is the most visible part of the M&E system, where collected and analysed data is presented as information for key stakeholders to use. Reporting is a critical part of M&E because no matter how well data may be collected and analysed, if it is not well presented it cannot be well used – this can be a considerable waste of valuable time, resources and personnel (IFRC, 2011:57).

Kusek and Rist (2004:130) affirm that reporting on results obtained through M&E serves the following uses:

- It demonstrates accountability and delivery on political promises;
- It promotes and advocates a particular point of view;
- It promotes organisational learning;
- It explores and investigates in order to understand what works (or not) and why (or not);
- It documents findings and develops the institutional memory; and
- It involves stakeholders and promotes understanding and support.

When reporting, it is important to bear in mind the needs, interests, expectations and preferred communication medium of the audience, and to present performance data in a clear and understandable form (Kusek & Rist, 2004:131-132).

#### **2.4.6 Plan for Necessary Conditions and Capacities**

An effective M&E system requires capable people to support it. Getting the M&E system working also means thinking of appropriate incentives, ensuring the right and enough human capacity at hand, and formulating ways of storing and sharing information (IFAD, 2014:14). The key staff and partners involved in M&E responsibilities must be ensured to have the knowledge, skills, tools and support to carry out their respective tasks. A well-functioning M&E system requires human resources, training, as well as materials and financial resources.

Key considerations in planning for human resources and capacity building for a project/programme's M&E system include:

- Assess the project's/programme's human resources capacity for M&E;
- Determine the extent of local participation;
- Determine the extent of outside expertise – outside specialists (consultants) are usually employed for technical expertise, objectivity and credibility to save time and/or as a donor requirement;
- Define the roles and responsibilities for M&E – it is important to have well-defined roles and responsibilities at each level of the M&E system;
- Plan to manage the project/programme team's M&E activities; and
- Identify M&E capacity-building requirements and opportunities. (IFRC, 2011:73)

Appropriate structures for M&E are essential for M&E start-up. This is critical to the success – or failure – of M&E. It is the moment when negotiations need to reach decisions about each of the partner's responsibilities and information requirements. The table below gives examples of the questions one could use when planning M&E conditions and capacities (IFAD, 2014:14).

**Table 3: Questions to guide the detailed planning of monitoring and evaluation conditions and capacities**

<b>Conditions and Capacities</b>	<b>Questions to Guide Detailed Planning</b>
Human capacity for M&E	What are the existing M&E capacities with project partners? What training will be necessary? What consultancy will be required?
Incentives for implanting M&E	Are M&E responsibilities included in job descriptions and terms of reference? How will reflection and learning amongst staff, partners and the intended primary stakeholders be encouraged?
Organisational structures	Will there be an M&E unit or will M&E be spread amongst all parties? If there is unit, how many people will it have and where will it be located, under whose authority? How closely connected will M&E be with project management?
Management information systems (MIS)	What information must be stored and accessible, when, how and for whom? What level of computerisation is required and appropriate? What expertise will be required to set up the information management system?
Financial resources	Is there a separate M&E budget and have sufficient resources been allocated? Has the staffing allocation for the project considered the time for all relevant staff to undertake M&E activities?

By following the six steps highlighted by M&E Guide by ADRA International Food Security Department (2007), NGOs should be able to develop an effective M&E system that can provide useful, reliable information for management and accountability purposes, timeously so that these results can be used to enhance performance. The next section will discuss the external factors that aim to create a conducive environment for an effective M&E system.

## **2.5 CRITERIA SUPPORTIVE TO MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS**

The following presents external factors that may influence effective implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems.

### **2.5.1 Committed Leadership to Generate and Use Monitoring and Evaluation Information**

Data and information are critical to the system of M&E. Organisational leadership has influence and plays a critical role as to how M&E information should be generated and used. In the case of sustainable results-based M&E systems, political leadership is a prerequisite primarily because “it takes a strong and consistent ... and political champion to institute the system” (Kusek & Rist, 2004:20).

Those who provide leadership, including influential sponsors, are more likely to affect the utilisation of M&E information and the functioning of the system. As a result, it is important to achieve a positive relationship between an information source and acceptance. In essence, the higher the credibility of the source the more likely the information is to be accepted (Rist, in Boyle & Lemaire, 1999:128-129). As affirmed by Rist, this is because “... Information that comes into an organization without a legitimate inside sponsor ... is not likely to be accepted” (Rist, in Boyle & Lemaire, 1999:128-129).

Furthermore, the M&E system should be regarded as a long-term effort that requires strategic commitment from the outset (Marriott & Goyder, 2009). There are six crucial components involved in building the sustainability of M&E systems and each need continuous attention and care. These are demand, clear roles and responsibilities, trustworthy and credible information, accountability, incentives and capacity.

### **2.5.2 Attentive Management**

The level of commitment that a manager has to improving strategic and operational decision making within the organisation impacts on the success of an M&E system. Such levels can be reflected through the efforts that a manager puts into the practises of consistent M&E and increased utilisation of findings within the system. In essence, M&E systems “are continuous works in progress” (Kusek & Rist, 2004:2). Consequently, “efforts to generate learning within the organization must be constantly renewed” (Rist, in Boyle & Lemaire, 1999:128-129). The success of an M&E system, on the other hand, can be established through some of the key managerial tasks, such as consensus building with end-users of findings (Chen, 2005:198) and “the promotion

of transparency and accountability within a decentralised implementation environment” (Kusek & Rist, 2004:21; Posavac & Carey, 1997).

### **2.5.3 Relevant Skills and Competencies**

The success of an M&E system depends on the capacity building of personnel involved in M&E processes; individuals who capture and feed information to the system, those assessing and interpreting data and end-users of the M&E results. Kusek and Rist (2004:22) affirm, stating that “the ability to accurately implement an effective M&E system tends to rely on the level of human resources involved in the process, thus skills and competencies play a significant role”.

M&E personnel need to be equipped with appropriate abilities and skills in basic information technology and statistics. Kusek and Rist (2004:22) and Chen (2005:198) add that in order to reap the full benefit of an M&E system, personnel involved in the M&E process need to have sound technical skills, such as in IT and information, as well as statistical capacity. Addressing priority skills and competencies necessitates the appointment of individuals who will have the required skills set, thus resulting in strong M&E system. As such, authorities responsible for nominating or appointing M&E officials should have restrictions on the required knowledge and competencies. According to Ochieng, et al. (2012), weak M&E is a result of authorities who lack restrictions in the appointment of M&E officials (Kusek & Rist, 2004:22; Chen, 2005:198). Apart from this, self-evaluation is a critical factor to the success of an M&E system. Rist (in Boyle & Lemaria, 1999:128-129) advises that “inter-institutional scrutiny must be perceived as legitimate to be accepted and utilised”.

### **2.5.4 Participation of Stakeholders**

Encompassing an effective M&E system is the inclusion of external participants, not just the impartial evaluators but also both the implementers (agencies) and receivers (communities) (Ninh, 2004:11-19). The involvement of stakeholders in the M&E process aims to establish a sense of ownership in the evaluation process. Mulwa & Nguluu (2003) asserts that the inclusion of all key stakeholders and NGO’s



management and committees during the M&E process strengthens the evaluation. Save the Children (1995:16) and O'Sullivan (2004:25) contend that "Public and stakeholder participation in the M&E and decision making improves the accuracy and usefulness of the results; promotes the feasibility and utilisation of the M&E results; enhances ownership of the project, programme or policy; expands understanding through different viewpoints; and limits individuals' bias through multiple inputs". Overall, the value of M&E can be recognised through, firstly, its ability to give attention to the right challenges, secondly, on whether it promotes good quality and appropriate data on time and, lastly, its ability to utilise feedback to enhance organisational performance (Rabie, 2011:113).

In addition, the involvement of stakeholders, including local community and civil society has consequently resulted in a growing interest in participatory approaches to M&E. According to Ochieng, et al. (2012), a participatory monitoring and evaluation method is often recommended, as all key stakeholders are involved in the planning and evaluation phases of projects. The involvement of community members or other extended key stakeholders, such as beneficiaries of intended services, strengthens the M&E process.

#### **2.5.5 Documented Policy and Guidelines and Continuous Review of the Policy**

An effective monitoring and evaluation system depends on the existence of policies and rules supporting its implementation. "the non-existence of regulatory frameworks minimises the success of any M&E" (Maphunye, 2015:25). The policy document provides established guidelines on the mechanisms of evaluation delivery and clarity on the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of key players (Lahey, 2009). By making requirements and expectations more explicit and consolidated, the M&E policy will encourage conduct of good M&E at various levels of programming and the delivery of results (Global Environment Facility :2017)

It is important to recognise how M&E systems and policies interact with each other for mutual benefit. Strong M&E systems provide the means to compile and integrate all the necessary information into the policy cycle, thus providing the basis for enabling sound governance and accountability in education policies.



The true impact of policies can only be realised through systematic monitoring of the implementation of the policy and measurement of its impact. A good M&E system can help policy makers and planners to articulate better evidence-driven policies that take into account both the political and user perspective (UNESCO, 2006:28).

Any effective M&E system should integrate all dimensions in order to be of use to politicians in designing responsive policies and interventions, to managers for monitoring and evaluating planned activities, and to all stakeholders and society as a whole for providing evidence-based accountability and transparency. There is a need then to further strengthen the M&E system to provide a deeper evidence base for management and decision-making and to help build a culture of evaluation across the whole organisation (UNESCO, 2006:72).

The next section discusses the challenges with M&E systems. This is critical for the case study analysis as challenges can limit the efficiency and accuracy of M&E systems, creating an administrative burden.

## **2.6 CHALLENGES WITH MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS**

Some of the inherent challenges and limitations of monitoring and evaluating development work are well documented in the literature and include the non-linearity of political change, the complexity of contextual variables and issues around methodology, attribution, resources and timing (Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005; Jacobs, Barnets & Ponsford, 2010). The challenges to M&E systems are critical for the case study analysis as challenges can limit the efficiency and accuracy of M&E systems, creating an administrative burden.

Save the Children (1995:117-123), Valadez and Bamberger (1994:26-27) and Boyle and Lemaire (1999:34-40) highlight five challenges that may hinder effective functions:

- Problems with data and information: inaccurate data may undermine the entire M&E effort as this renders the data useless and, by association, also leads to the M&E exercise being regarded as useless.
- Institutional problems: coordination and logistical problems arising between different agencies involved in M&E, which may delay or prevent the flow of information.

- Resource constraints: human resource constraints may refer to the unavailability of personnel to conduct the evaluations or constraints in terms of the required skills and knowledge to conduct the evaluation. Time constraints include delays in starting the evaluations, as well as delays in obtaining results.
- Problems with the M&E design: the design of the evaluation may be inappropriate within the available capacity at local government level, leading to an inability to conduct and manage the study at the appropriate quality levels.

Most the above can be prevented or addressed through thorough planning (design) of the M&E system, dedicated leadership to direct the process and maintain focus, and attentive management to steer the roll-out and maintenance of the M&E system (Rabie, 2011:109).

Mackay (2007:101) highlights the danger of over-engineering an M&E system, particularly through multiple monitoring systems with an excessive number of performance indicators. Jacobs, Barnets and Ponsford (2010:43) also argue that over-engineered and complex monitoring systems that are developed as a result of top-down approaches can become too cumbersome and uncoordinated to be useful.

Kusek and Rist (2004:159) highlight the challenge of a lack of skilled M&E professionals, technically trained M&E personnel and a greater demand for capacity. Authors have looked at different countries with working M&E systems to draw lessons from the challenges they experience. Lopez-Acevedo, et al. (2012:180) highlight that one of the main M&E system challenges faced by Mexico is sustaining the use of the M&E system in budget decisions and policy making. In Mackay (2007:123), four challenges facing the M&E system are listed from the experience of Colombia as the lack of a single, clear conceptual framework; a need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the organisations; absence of clear links between planning, budgeting, and evaluation; and problems with the availability and frequency of data, as well as problems with data quality controls.

Other systems largely generate data on the service offered rather than quality and outcomes to monitor programme performance (Segone, 2008:27). According to Segone (2008:27) the following four elements poses challenges to M&E systems: 1. supply-driven drive towards ownership; 2. perceived risk, political and financial consequences; 3. time frames; and 4. perceived risk of capacities.

## 2.7 THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In the previous sections, all the core components of an effective M&E system have been identified and explored in the literature. This makes it possible to answer the first research question; what constitutes an effective M&E system and highlight key components. However, to be able to continue with the study, a conceptual framework needs to be formulated. In creating and finalising the framework, all external and internal components and sub-components derived from different sources of literature are merged and result in the conceptual framework with 11 components and key considerations (Table 4). This conceptual framework increases the understanding of what an effective M&E system consists of.

**Table 4: A list of components and considerations for an effective monitoring and evaluation system**

<b>Components of an Effective M&amp;E System</b>	
<b>1. Establish the Purpose and Scope of M&amp;E</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The purposes of M&amp;E are explicitly defined and articulated.</li> <li>• The extent or scope of M&amp;E is identified.</li> </ul>	<b>2. Decide What to Monitor and Evaluate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear identification of who the main stakeholders are. Have clear indicators.</li> <li>• Key information needs of the different stakeholders are included in the M&amp;E system.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Plan for Information Gathering and Organising</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project has defined data collection methodologies and tools that are in line with the information needs.</li> <li>• Existence of a list of key persons involved in data collection, schedule of frequency of information collection.</li> <li>• Stakeholders are involved in data collection and processing.</li> </ul>	<b>4. Plan Critical Reflection Processes and Events</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different (critical) reflection events and processes are defined in the program and in place.</li> <li>• The extent of stakeholders' involvement in the critical reflection and events is defined.</li> <li>• The extent to which the organisation has a learning environment is defined.</li> <li>• Extent to which a learning environment created with stakeholders (including beneficiaries) is defined.</li> </ul>

<b>5. Plan for Communication and Reporting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reporting and communication mechanisms are defined, tools developed and reports generated and shared.</li> <li>• The reporting documents and processes are timely and of good quality.</li> <li>• The results / findings are communicated / reported to all stakeholders.</li> </ul>	<b>6. Plan for the Necessary Conditions and Capacities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human resource adequate for M&amp;E is defined.</li> <li>• Structures and processes for M&amp;E are in place and adequate.</li> <li>• Information management systems (MIS) are in place.</li> <li>• Financial capacity for M&amp;E is adequate.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Documented Policy and Guidelines and Continuous Review of the Policy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established policy documents guiding the implementation of M&amp;E system.</li> <li>• Routinely reviews M&amp;E policy documents.</li> </ul>	<b>8. Capacitated, Motivated Staff to Operate the System</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity interventions and training is adequately provided to staff.</li> </ul>
<b>9. Participation of Stakeholders</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which M&amp;E system promotes external participation.</li> </ul>	<b>10. Committed Leadership to Generate and Use Information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership and management support the generation and utilisation of M&amp;E information.</li> </ul>
<b>11. Attentive Management to Implement and Maintain the System</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management is committed to improved strategic and operational decision making in the organisation.</li> <li>• Management performs some key tasks (building trust, promotes transparency and accountability, etc.).</li> </ul>	

## 2.8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, discussion centred on the composition of effective M&E systems, reviewing past studies and theoretical literature on monitoring and evaluation systems in order to understand the critical components in order to create a conceptual framework. Reviewing past studies reveals key elements for an M&E system to be effective as: designing and setting up the system, gathering and managing, reflecting critically to improve action and communicating and reporting results. Greater focus was placed on examining the components essential in designing an M&E system, as well as the external factors conducive for M&E system to be effective.

An important finding was that there is no single or 'one-size-fits-all' system for M&E and that agencies need to design their own M&E systems to fit their specific needs. Similar guidelines in setting up an M&E system are proposed by different authors. This research has followed the six steps proposed by ADRA International Food Security

Department M&E guide and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, which are largely adopted by most organisations. The proposed steps are:

1. Establishing the purpose and scope of the M&E system – Why do we need M&E and how comprehensive should the M&E system be?
2. Identifying performance questions, information needs and indicators – What do we need to know in order to monitor and evaluate the project so that it can be managed effectively?
3. Planning information gathering and organisation – How will the required information be gathered and organised?
4. Planning critical reflection process and events – How will we make sense of the outcome of the information gathered, and how will it be used to make improvements in project implementation?
5. Planning for quality communication and reporting – How and to whom do we want to communicate project results? What project activities and processes do we need to communicate?
6. Planning for the necessary conditions and capacities – What resources and capacity do we need to ensure that the M&E system works effectively?

In practice, problems often encountered with M&E systems relate to the availability of accurate and timely data and information; institutional problems related to the capacity and political willingness to respond to evaluation information, often influenced by the physical placement of the evaluation function in the organisation; financial, human, skills and time constraints that prevent appropriate M&E efforts; and inappropriate M&E system designs that do not fit the organisational capacity or answer the key performance questions raised. Most of these problems can be prevented when designing the system.

The next chapter outlines the designs of M&E systems implemented by local and international organisations. It will present mini case studies of organisations within the local and international level and perform a comparative analysis thus capturing the adoption of M&E and drawing lessons.

## **CHAPTER 3: COMPARITIVE ANALYSIS OF MULTIPLE CASE STUDIES**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this research is to contribute towards filling the gap in existing knowledge regarding the monitoring and evaluation process of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The first objective of the study is to examine what constitutes a working M&E system and its key components. Chapter 2 explored the composition of an effective M&E system. It reviewed literature on the external and internal factors of efficient M&E. Based on the literature review, some of the key elements of an effective M&E system are designing and setting up the system, gathering and managing reflecting critically to improve action, and communicating and reporting results. Other elements also exist, such as attentive management, documented policy, stakeholder participation and relevant skills and competencies. The literature review highlights some of the challenges that hamper the effectiveness of an M&E system as the availability of accurate and timely data and information, institutional problems related to capacity, and political willingness to respond to evaluation information. The criteria developed in Chapter 2 are a possible comparison point to compare the M&E systems adopted by various NGOs.

This chapter aims to document the existing approaches of M&E within local and international organisations in order to systematically and objectively compare how these systems are implemented and used in practice within the NGOs. This will test and refine the criteria developed in Chapter 2 in order to understand what is feasible in the typical resource constrained environment faced by most NGOs. To contribute to the on-going identification of good practices for developing M&E systems within NGOs, the study will assess case studies of NGOs that have systems in place to discover what works in the resource constrained environment of NGOs.

The next section of the study will draw upon case study sources to observe evidence on effective elements of M&E systems in both international and local case studies so as to offer a final conclusion of the developed criteria for the main case study.

### 3.2 CASE STUDIES SELECTION

The selection of cases adopted a combination of accidental and quota sampling. The following process was followed. A search was done on the internet using the search term of 'international NGO'. This offered a vast list of NGOs. The organisation names were then individually entered into a new search along with the term 'M&E System'. Each search result was explored to determine the depth of secondary information available on that specific NGO's M&E system. The search was concluded once two (2) international NGOs were identified offering sufficient information on their existing M&E systems to serve the purpose of the research objective.

A different process was followed to identify the local case studies. Here, the researcher drew on prior knowledge of operating NGOs in the area and entered these organisations' names into an internet search engine, along with the search term 'M&E system' to find documented evidence. The search was concluded once two local NGOs with sufficient secondary information of their M&E systems were identified.

While accidental and quota sampling techniques are convenient, the techniques have several limitations. The main limitation is that not all relevant cases had an equal chance of inclusion in the study.

For the international case study, the use of the internet search engine means that the researcher's search is limited by the programming parameters of the search engine (i.e. internet hit rate of the site, geographic filters and language barriers). For the local case studies, inclusion is limited based on the researcher's prior awareness of the case. The main disadvantage of quota sampling is that the quota may not be large enough to represent all practices of M&E systems. Including only four case studies still excludes many useful cases. However, the quota size was extended to maximise the number of cases to be included, within the time and resource constraints faced by the researcher, allowing the researcher to investigate alternative practices adopted by NGOs. These limitations may have an effect on the study; however, as the purpose of the case studies is to assess alternative M&E systems, the comparison of two international and two local cases should allow coverage of alternative practices to implement M&E systems that can offer a base for the assessment of the main case

study. Taking the above into account, the following case studies were selected as suitable for this investigation: Save the Children, CARE International, Grassroot Soccer and Black Sash (see tables 5 to 8).

### **Save the Children Fund**

Save the Children Fund, commonly known as Save the Children, is an international non-governmental organisation that promotes children's rights, provides relief and helps support children in developing countries. It was established in the United Kingdom in 1919 in order to improve the lives of children through better education, health care, and economic opportunities, as well as to provide emergency aid during natural disasters, war and other conflicts. The organisation promotes policy changes in order to gain more rights for young people, especially by enforcing the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child. It further runs programmes on health education, child protection and child rights governance. Save the Children International's vision is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation. Its mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives (Save the Children, 2018).

**Table 5: Save the Children key information**

Save the Children Information	
Founded	1919
Location	United Kingdom
M&E approach	MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning)
Content reviewed	Save the Children's Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) Introductory Course (Session 1-9) (2018)

### **CARE International**

CARE is a leading relief and development non-governmental organisation fighting global poverty. Established in 1946, it is now a confederation composed of 14 members. In 2012, CARE worked in 84 countries around the world, "supporting development and humanitarian aid projects to reach more than 83 million people. While CARE is a large international organization with more than 11,000 employees worldwide, [it has] a strong local presence: 97% of staff are nationals of the countries where [the] programs are run" (CARE International, 2018).



CARE International's mission is to work around the globe to save lives, defeat poverty and achieve social justice. Its vision is to seek a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and all people live with dignity and security (CARE International, 2018).

**Table 6: CARE International key information**

<b>CARE International Information</b>	
Founded	1946
Location	United Kingdom
M&E approach	PMERL (Participation, Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning)
Content reviewed	PMERL (A manual for local practitioners) (2012)

### **Grassroot Soccer South Africa**

Grassroot Soccer South Africa (GRS South Africa) is an independent, locally registered non-profit organisation with a South African Board of Directors. Grassroot Soccer first began programs in South Africa in 2006, and has steadily built a very strong local infrastructure. Grassroot Soccer is an adolescent health organisation that leverages the power of soccer to educate, inspire and mobilise youth in developing countries to overcome their greatest health challenges, live healthier, more productive lives, and be agents for change in their communities (Grassroot Soccer, 2018).

**Table 7: Grassroot Soccer key information**

<b>Grassroot Soccer Information</b>	
Founded	2006
Location	South Africa
M&E approach	Results-based M&E system
Content reviewed	Grassroot Soccer Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (2016)

### **Black Sach**

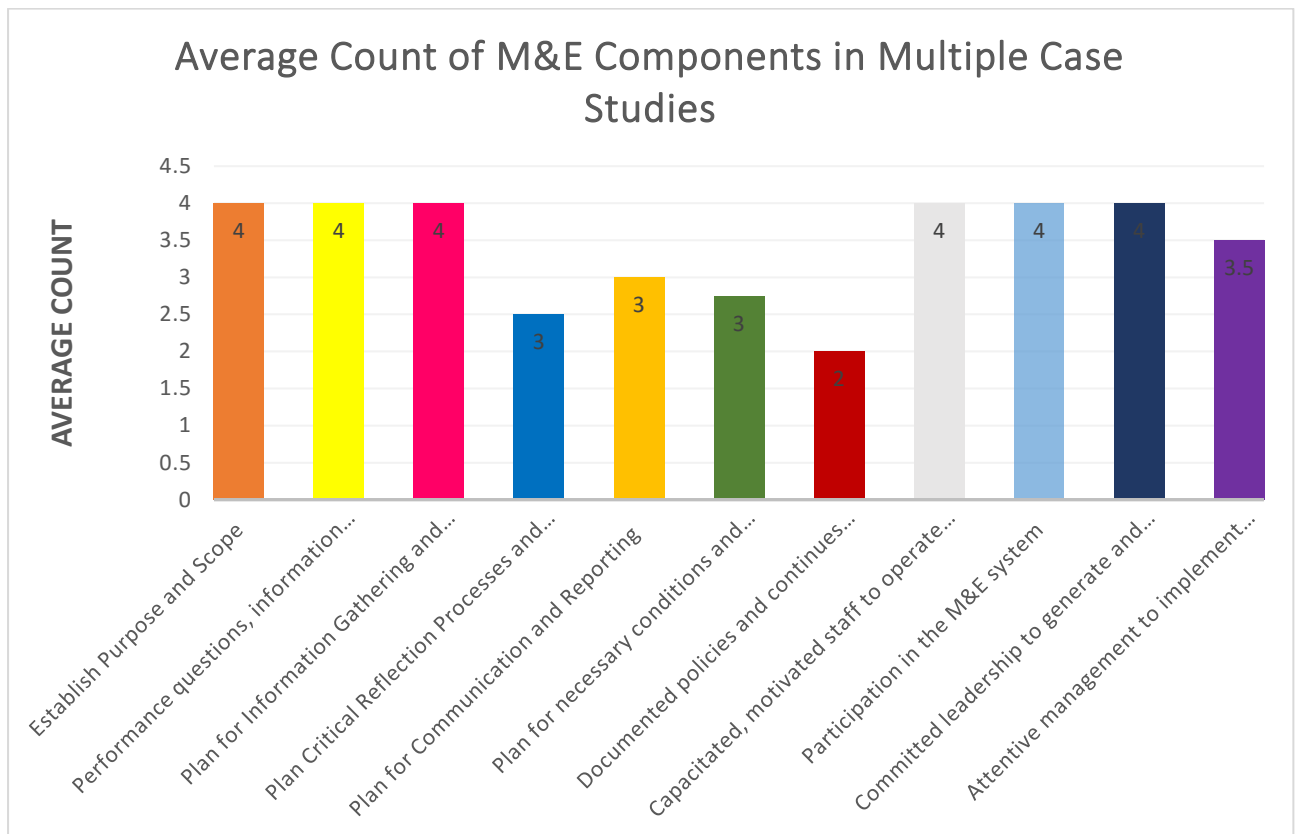
The Black Sash was a non-violent white women's resistance organisation that was founded on 19 May 1955 in South Africa by Jean Sinclair, Ruth Foley, Elizabeth McLaren, Tertia Pybus, Jean Bosazza, and Helen Newton-Thompson. The organisation works to uphold and promote the values of justice, integrity, dignity and rigour, the affirmation of women, independence and courage. Individual and collective non-violent action can transform situations and impact on society as a whole. The organisation's mission is to work towards the realisation of socio-economic rights, as outlined in the South African Constitution 1996, with an emphasis on social security and social protection for the most vulnerable, particularly women and children. Black Sach believes the implementation of socio-economic rights demands open, transparent and accountable governance (state, corporate and civil society). To this end the organisation intends to promote an active civic engagement by all living in South Africa, made possible by a strong and vibrant civil society comprised of community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, coalitions and movements (Black Sach, 2018).

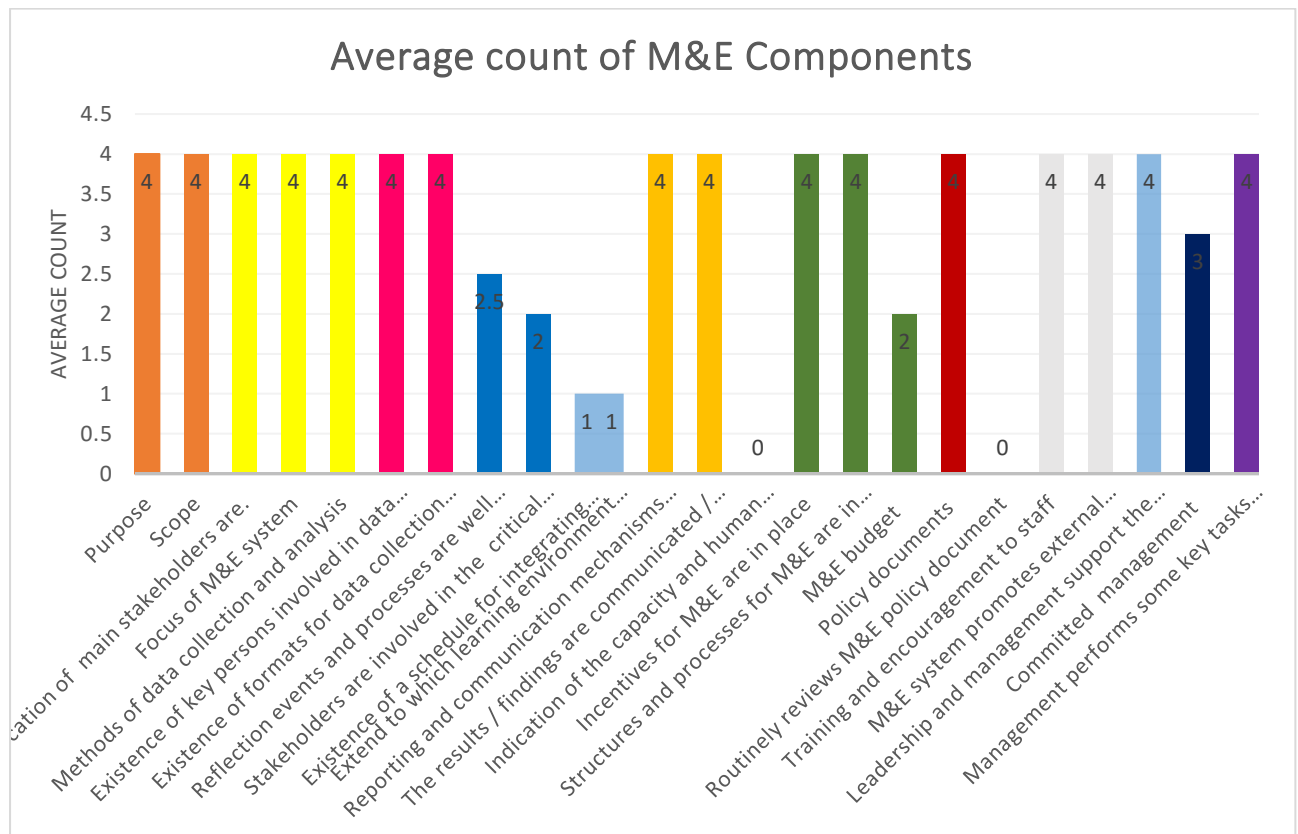
**Table 8: BlackSach key information**

<b>BlackSach Information</b>	
Founded	1955
Location	South Africa
M&E approach	CBM (community-based monitoring)
Content reviewed	BlackSach-CBM 2018

### 3.3 MULTIPLE CASE STUDY DISCUSSIONS

This section of the study presents detailed findings on the multiple case studies. Figures 1 and 2 give a brief overview of the implementation of M&E components and key elements used in the assessment. Before elaborating upon each component, an average count is presented followed by a summary in Table 9, showing which elements are implemented by which case study, as marked by a tick symbol (✓).

**Figure 2: Average of monitoring and evaluation components in multiple case studies**

**Figure 3: Count of the monitoring and evaluation considerations of multiple case studies**

### **Purpose and scope**

The purpose and scope component of the monitoring and evaluation system has been mentioned by all four case studies, thus this component has an average count of 4.

**Table 9: Count of considerations for purpose and scope from multiple case studies**

Component	Key Considerations	Case Studies				Count
		SC	CI	GRS	BS	
Established the purpose and scope of the system	Is the purpose of M&E explicitly defined and articulated?	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
	Is the scope of M&E identified and articulated?	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
	To what extent is the scope?					
	<b>Average Count</b>					<b>4</b>

It was established in the literature that M&E is undertaken for different purposes and uses (Weiss, 1998:20). For Save the Children and CARE International, it is observed that the M&E systems are geared towards upwards and downwards accountability, generating lessons learned, informing strategic decision making, and building the M&E capacity of all stakeholders involved in monitoring and managing their own processes and development. Whereas with the local case studies, Grassroot Soccer and Blacksach, the M&E systems are mainly geared towards (external) accountability and operational management; however, they do have some elements of generating lessons learned.

The scope of M&E is determined through the analysis of the outlined M&E purposes. In the literature it was mentioned that the scope of the M&E systems is reflective of the established M&E purpose. As such, the analysis of the M&E purposes reveals that international case studies have a wider M&E system, while local cases have a narrower system. A content analysis reveals that the M&E scope of international cases was designed to cover different aspects of M&E, such as analysis and use of information, data management and reporting schedules, learning mechanisms, training, knowledge management and resources. Local cases were observed to have M&E plans that consist of project objectives, project output, outcomes, conceptual measures and definitions, along with baseline data and a monitoring schedule.

### **Identifying performance questions, information needs and indicators**

The second component of effective M&E systems comprises of two elements and received a mean score of 3.5.

**Table 10: Count of considerations for performance and indicators questions and information needs**

COMPONENT	ASSESSMENT ELEMENTS	CASE STUDIES				Count
		SC	CI	GRS	BS	
Identifying performance questions, information needs and indicators	Key information needs of the different stakeholders are included in the M&E system. (i.e. have clear indicators been defined?)	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
	M&E system focuses on the program, organisational, and institutional issues. E.g. staff performance, partner collaboration, policies and networks.	✓	✓	✓	X	3
	Average Count					<b>4</b>

Having knowledge of the information needs of stakeholders was mostly observed in all four case studies. In the literature, it was mentioned that it is it is fundamental to have a clear understanding of the information needs and expectations of multiple stakeholders affected by the project/programme (IFRC, 2011). What was indicated by the four case studies were the information needs of different stakeholders involved in the project/programme, which includes donors, community, partner organisations and beneficiaries. It was observed that international cases have a vast list of stakeholders interested in M&E information. As indicated by CARE International in their M&E document, additional key categories of stakeholders interested in obtaining M&E information includes “Media, journalists, Academicians, researchers, consultants and other International members: potential funders of some projects, and professional colleagues with shared interests” (CARE International, 2012). This was similarly observed in the Save the Children case study.

With regards to the M&E indicators in the data, it was observed that all three case studies have performance indicators. For Save the Children, “22 Global Indicators are established in an ambitious effort to aggregate results data from across our country programmes. These indicators have been developed by the Global Initiatives, the

Global Campaign and the Humanitarian Team, and are agreed across SCI and the members” (Save the Children, 2014). For both CARE International and Grassroot Soccer, M&E systems consist of various types of indicators used in projects (CARE International, 2012; Grassroot Soccer, 2016). Black Sach made no mention of the indicators; however, it is worth noting that the researcher had access to information that could verify indicators within the Black Sach case study.

The second element of having an M&E system, focusing on programme issues, was explained by the three cases: Save the Children, CARE International and Grassroots Soccer. For CARE, it was mentioned that its M&E systems are carried out to “identify overall learning and issues to be addressed” (CARE International, 2012). Grassroot Soccer mentioned that “Data is used at the programme management level to identify challenges, pinpoint opportunities for greater impact or expansion, and inform decision-making for programmes” (Grassroot Soccer, 2016). Save the Children reiterated a similar focus, stating that the MEAL approach “investigates operational and learning issues as a project progress and identifies improvements and mid-course correction” (Save the Children, 2014).

### **Plan for information gathering and analysis**

The third component, consisting of three elements, was included by all four case studies and scored an average of 4.

**Table 11: Count of considerations for information gathering and analysis from multiple case studies**

COMPONENT	ASSESSMENT ELEMENTS	CASE STUDIES				Count
		SC	CI	GRS	BS	
Plan for information gathering and analysis	The project has defined data-collection methodologies and tools that are in line with the information needs	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
	Existence of a list of key persons involved in data collection, schedule of frequency of information collection.	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
	Stakeholders are involved in data collection and processing.	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
	Average Count					4

Each information need or indicator may require different data gathering methods, as such methodologies and tools have to be established (ADRA International, 2007). For Save the Children, CARE International and Grassroot Soccer, a mixed-method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data collection, was defined and discussed. Black Sach case study used qualitative methods and tools, such as surveys.

Secondly, having a list of key persons involved in data collection was prevalent in all four studies. In the case of Save the Children, data collection and accountability are largely in the hands of the operations teams and partners. Teams are often engaged in evaluation, applying learnings and quality monitoring (Save the Children, 2014). A similar approach can be seen in Black Sach, where data gathering is conducted by trained monitors and community partners. In the cases of CARE International and Grassroots, a participatory approach to data collection is adopted, which actively involves all levels of staff and implements coordinators at community level.

The frequency of information collection was mentioned in all four case studies. For Black Sach, data gathering takes place over a three month period each year and



consists of a light-touch survey conducted by trained monitors. Grassroot Soccer indicates the collecting baseline, midline and endline data for the first ever Randomised Control Trial (Grassroots Soccer, 2016). In the case of both the Save the Children and CARE case study, frequency of reporting informed the frequency of data collection. As Chaplowe (2008:15) iterates, the frequency of M&E data collection is determined by reporting requirements. As illustrated by Save the Children, the process of reporting and gathering data is conducted for annual reporting purposes. In the case of CARE international, reporting occurs monthly at community level and annually to line agencies/joint review planning with line agencies (CARE International, 2012).

Thirdly, the involvement of stakeholders in data collection and processing is mentioned in all four case studies. Collins (1996:3) mentioned that “the empowerment of beneficiaries and stakeholders can help sustain a project beyond the disbursement period due to enhanced capacities and ensure an increased level of beneficiary and stakeholder interest in project management”. CARE International stakeholders are involved in the design of participation, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning (PMERL) (CARE International, 2012). Similarly, Grassroot Soccer “takes a participatory approach to M&E by involving all levels of staff within the process. Implementers and coordinators at community level are provided with M&E capacity building and training to ensure they are competent to complete, and be accountable for, their reporting” (Grassroot Soccer, 2016:8). Save the Children mentions that children and young people have different ways in which they are involved in monitoring through the programme cycle and at the key points in the evaluation, including by developing evaluation questions and conducting data collection (Save the Children, 2014:5). For Black Sack, a community-based monitoring approach is used, which encourages public participation involving the community, government and partners (CBMBlacksack, 2018).

### **Plan critical reflection process events**

The fourth component contains three elements and has an average of 3.

**Table 12: Count of key considerations for critical reflection and events from multiple case studies**

COMPONENT	ASSESSMENT ELEMENT	CASE STUDIES				COUNT
		SC	CI	GRS	BS	
Plan critical reflection processes events	Different (critical) reflection events and processes defined in the program and in place.	✓	✓	X	✓	3
	The degree of stakeholders involvement in the decision making processes (strategic and operational).	✓	✓	X	✓	3
	The extent to which the organisation has a learning environment is defined.	✓	✓	X	✓	3
	Extent to which a learning environment is created with stakeholders (including beneficiaries) and defined	X	✓	X	X	1
	Average Count					<b>3</b>

As indicated in the literature, project/programme M&E critical reflections occur formally and informally and involve an extensive series of potentially reflective events (European Commission Civil Society Fund in Ethiopia, 2017:6). For CARE International, data revealed that critical reflection occurs formally through workshops with partners and primary stakeholders (CARE International, 2012). For Black Sach, reflection and learning involves a review of surveys tools and report formats, to understand “what worked well and should be repeated, as well as the challenges and how these should be changed in the following monitoring cycle” (CMB, Black Sach, 2018). For Save the Children, data critical reflection practises are in place; however, insufficient information is provided on the type of processes employed.

Involvement of potential users of the methods in selection or development of the methods is critical (ADRA International, 2007:39). For CARE International, data reveals that critical reflection events are participatory: “Participation, joint learning and

reflection processes are integrated into the monitoring and evaluation of Community-based adaptation to ensure these efforts are as effective as possible” (CARE International, 2012:10). For Black Sach, the process of critical reflection involves primary stakeholders, such as project members.

With regards to the fourth element, it is noted that three case studies (Save the Children, CARE International and Black Sach) are devoted to organisational learning and building effective and sustainable knowledge and learning systems. For these three case studies there was little discussion on how staff meets regularly to openly discuss and critically reflect on expected and unexpected issues and on how lessons learned are documented.

The fifth element of involving stakeholders is specific to the case of CARE international. The PMERL approach “encourages the ownership of and accountability for the M&E process and outputs by the communities themselves” and allows the communities to facilitate critical reflection and learning (CARE International, 2012).

### **Plan for communication and reporting**

The fifth component with two elements is relevant in three cases studies.

**Table 13: Count of considerations for communication and reporting plans from multiple case studies**

COMPONENT	ASSESSMENT ELEMENT	CASE STUDIES				COUNT
		SC	CI	GRS	BS	
Plan for communication and reporting	Reporting and communication mechanisms are defined, tools developed and reports generated and shared.	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
	The reporting documents and processes are timely and of good quality.	X	X	✓	X	1
	The results / findings are communicated / reported to all stakeholders.	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
	Average Count					3

At the beginning of a project it is important to develop a detailed communication strategy. This strategy should include not only formal reports but also communication efforts that seek feedback about interim findings, and should discuss which actions are needed (ADRA International, 2007:39). In the case of Save the Children, annual progress reports are prepared against outputs and outcomes and submitted to the donors. This is similar to the case of CARE International, except that CARE reports monthly at community level and offers annual reports to line agencies (CARE International, 2012:55). Grassroot Soccer prepares reports against outcomes and varied indicators associated with all grants and programmes (Grassroot Soccer, M&E strategy, 2016:7). In the case of Black Sach, reporting is done against the results and output of monitoring activities. High-impact posters are used to report findings to the different stakeholders. In addition, results are packaged into a handout, which is then used to plan dialogues with stakeholders. For both local case studies, there is little mention of the frequency of reporting.

The second element is specific to the Grassroot Soccer case study. It was observed that a SKILLZ scoreboard database is used to instantaneously update data. This allows M&E staff to report up-to-date figures (Grassroot Soccer, M&E strategy, 2016:9).

The last element of reporting results to stakeholders is observed by all four case studies. It was mentioned that M&E results are reported to most stakeholders, including donors, beneficiaries and communities. It is observed that in all the case studies, appropriate reporting methods (for example visuals or written) are in line with stakeholders' information needs (Save the Children, 2014; CARE International, 2012; Grassroot Soccer, M&E strategy, 2016; CMB, Black Sach, 2018).

### **Plan for necessary capacities and conditions for monitoring and evaluation**

The sixth internal components of the M&E system, consisting of five elements, has an average of 3.

**Table 14: Count of plans for necessary monitoring and evaluation capacities and conditions from multiple case studies**

COMPONENT	ASSESSMENT ELEMENT	CASE STUDIES				COUNT
		SC	CI	GRS	BS	
Plan for M&E human resources and capacity building	Human capacity adequate for M&E and defined.	✓	✓	✓	X	3
	Structures and processes for M&E are in place and adequate.	✓	✓	✓	X	3
	Information management systems (IMS) are in place.	✓	✓	✓	X	3
	Financial capacity for M&E is adequate.	✓	✓	X	X	2
	Average Count					<b>3</b>

As mentioned in the literature, “the first step in planning for M&E human resources is to determine the available M&E experience within the project/programme team. It is also crucial to identify any gaps between the project/programme’s M&E needs and available personnel, which will inform the need for capacity building or outside expertise” (IFRC, 2011:69). The main point is that there should be an M&E team in place to carry out M&E activities (Save the Children, 2014; CARE International, 2012; Grassroot Soccer, M&E strategy ,2016). For Save the Children, country teams have built MEAL capacity into their structures in different ways and it is clear that there is an interest in building skills and capacity (Save the Children, 2014). In the case of CARE International, gaps in human capacities were identified in the form of “inadequate skills for data analysis and weak data management at project level” (CARE International, 2012).

For an M&E system to perform well, it is necessary to have well-trained officials or consultants who are highly skilled in M&E. Thus, most capacity-building plans place considerable emphasis on the provision of training on a range of M&E tools, methods, approaches and concepts (Segone, 2009:178). In the case of Grassroot Soccer, M&E capacity building and training was provided to M&E implementers and coordinators. This was particularly done to ensure they are competent to complete, and be accountable for, their reporting (Grassroot Soccer, M&E strategy, 2016;8). This was

the finding in all cases – there is evidence that M&E staff carrying out M&E activities are motivated and receive enough M&E skills training, providing them with technical skills and knowledge to successfully implement M&E (Save the Children, 2014; CARE International, 2012; Grassroot Soccer, M&E strategy, 2016; CMB-Black Sach, 2018).

It is important to have well-defined roles and responsibilities at each level of the M&E system (IFRC, 2011:72). In the case of Save the Children and CARE International, the structure of roles and responsibilities are defined in terms of country, regional and national levels (Save the Children, 2014; CARE International, 2012). In Grassroot Soccer, the roles and responsibilities of the M&E team and other business units within the organisation were defined (GRS M&E strategy, 2016:6).

In terms of the MIS, all organisations aside from CARE International have a computerised database in place. Save the Children stores many reports and evaluations on individual computers or shared drive folders on the internal network. Prior to that, a Savelt database was used; however, due to efforts to standardise the evaluation report, the database was unsuccessful. For Grassroot Soccer, a databased called SKILLZ Scoreboard is used, and cloud-based monitoring and an evaluation database provide secure storage, robust analysis, real-time feedback and efficient data entry for programmes. In the case of Black Sach, data is captured directly onto the system via mobile or desktop tools, or else transcribed from paper-based forms.

Lastly, it was mentioned in the literature that it is best to systematically plan the M&E budget early in the project/programme design process so that adequate funds are allocated and available for M&E activities (IFRC, 2011:74). This element was specific to the Save the Children case study. It was observed that the “Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) designates about 3-4% of a program’s budget for evaluation efforts” (Save the Children, 2014). This suggests that M&E budgets typically include lines for internal technical assistance, ongoing monitoring for data collection, travel, training, translation services, data analysis, report writing and the dissemination and publication of findings (Save the Children, 2014).

### **Documented policy and guidelines, and continuous review of the policy**

The seventh component of the documentation is verified in all case studies and has an average of 2.

**Table 15: Count of documented policy and continuous review of the policy from multiple case studies**

COMPONENT	KEY CONSIDERATIONS	CASE STUDIES				COUNT
		SC	CI	GRS	BS	
Documentation	Established policy documents guiding the implementation of an M&E system.	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
	Routinely reviews M&E policy documents.	x	x	x	x	0
	Average Count					2

Having a documented M&E plan, guidelines and operations manual is one of the most observed elements in all four case studies. In the literature it is mentioned that the documentation of M&E policy is essential as it provides clear guidelines on the mechanisms of monitoring, evaluation deliveries and clarity on the key player's role and responsibilities (Lahey, 2009). Three case studies, Save the Children, CARE International and Grassroot Soccer, have well-documented M&E guidelines that are available for download on their public domains . Black Sash provides an overview of their community-based monitoring (CBM) system on their webpage.

The practise of routinely reviewing an M&E policy document could not be verified in any of the selected case studies. It is, however, worth noting that Save the Children's MEAL guideline plan was published in 2016, CARE International has a 2012 PMERL, Grassroot Soccer released its M&E strategy in 2016, whereas with Black Sash the online publication date of the community-based monitoring (CBM) could not be determined.

### **Capacitated, motivated staff to operate the system**

The eighth component of an effective M&E system is concerned with motivating and capacitating staff. This is verified in all case studies and received an average of 4.

**Table 16: Count of considerations of capacitated, motivated staff to operate the system from multiple case studies**

COMPONENT	KEY CONSIDERATIONS	CASE STUDIES				COUNT
		SC	CI	GRS	BS	
Capacitated, motivated staff to operate the system	Capacity building intervention and training is adequately provided to staff.	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
	Average Count					4

Having institutional capacity is crucial for the successful implementation of an M&E system and enables an organisation's ownership of the system (Kusek & Rist; 2004:22; Cloete, et al., 2014:280). As mentioned by Kusek and Rist (2004:22) and Chen (2005:198), personnel responsible for performing M&E activities need to have a basic skill set and capabilities in order to successfully contribute to the effectiveness of the M&E system. The four case studies suggest that the organisations have training and development in place for personnel involved in the M&E process (i.e. individuals who capture and feed information to the system, those assessing and interpreting data and end-users of the M&E results). Both Grassroot Soccer and Save the Children provide capacity building for their staff and not necessarily for external stakeholders. Grassroot Soccer in particular mentions that capacity building and training is provided to its implementers and coordinators. The Save the Children case study also supports the notion, referring to internal M&E capacity building that is supported by internal and external trainings, usually conducted by M&E specialists.

Both the Black Sach and CARE international case studies suggest having capacity building and training directed at internal and external stakeholders. The Black Sach case study makes strong reference to the training provided to its partners and monitoring personnel involved in the CBM process. The CARE International case



study outlines a proposed long-term capacity building strategy for its CARE staff, as well as their partners and counterparts.

### **Participation in the M&E system**

The participation in the M&E system component was identified in all four case studies and had an average of 4.

**Table 17: Count of considerations for participation in the monitoring and evaluation system from multiple case studies**

COMPONENT	KEY CONSIDERATIONS	CASE STUDIES				COUNT
		SC	CI	GRS	BS	
Participation in the M&E system	The extent to which the M&E system promotes external participation.	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
	Average Count					4

The participation of stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation process was prevalent throughout each case study. Effective M&E encourages the participation of both implementers and receivers in the processes of M&E (Ninh, 2004:11-19). All four case studies convey a participatory approach towards the M&E process. CARE International case study in particular referred to the Participatory, Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Learning (PMERL) handbook, which consists of a clear and detailed discussion on participation and shows the process involved in the inclusive and meaningful participation of all community groups in all the phases of the CARE project. Save the Children case study referred to the evaluation handbook, which makes the participatory approach, methodologies and techniques clear that can be used by M&E personnel. Similarly, Black Sash referenced their community-based monitoring model, which aims to strengthen local decision making, community education, community capacity and effective public participation. Grassroot Soccer case study, on the other hand, takes a participatory approach to M&E by involving all

levels of staff within the process; however, they lacked communication on the ways in which they ensure active participation of their stakeholders.

### **Committed leadership to generate and use M&E information**

This external component is concerned with leadership's commitment to generate and use information. It was seen as verified by three case studies and scored an average of 3.

**Table 18: Count of considerations for committed leadership to generate and use M&E information from multiple case studies**

COMPONENT	KEY CONSIDERATIONS	CASE STUDIES				COUNT
		SC	CI	GRS	BS	
Committed leadership to generate and use M&E information	Leadership and management support the generation and utilisation of M&E information.	✓	✓	✓	X	3
	Average Count					3

Management's committed driving power to utilise M&E information is fundamental in ensuring a well-functioning M&E system (Cloete, et al., 2014:280). What was mentioned in the Save the Children case study is that the key success to the MEAL approach has been country director commitment towards the successful implementation of the M&E system and the active use of monitoring data for purposes of programme quality improvements (Save the Children, 2014:10). In the case of CARE International, it was mentioned that information is generated and use driven by both the community and programme managers/service providers. As indicated, communities and vulnerable groups use M&E information to articulate and action the changes needed, whereas project/programme managers use the information to improve their accountability to the members of the community and to justify changes in the planning (CARE International, 2012:15). Both Grassroot Soccer and Blacksach indicated the continuous use of information by management in making informed

decisions on the future prospects of the implemented programmes (Grassroot Soccer, 2016; Blacksach, 2018).

### **Attentive management to implement and maintain M&E system**

The last component concerned two elements of external effective M&E systems and has an average of 3.5.

**Table 19: Count of considerations for attentive management to implement and maintain the M&E system from multiple case studies**

COMPONENT	KEY CONSIDERATIONS	CASE STUDIES				COUNT
		SC	CI	GRS	BS	
Attentive management to implement and maintain the M&E system	Management is committed to constant monitoring and evaluation and use of findings.	✓	✓	✓	x	3
	Management performs some key tasks (building trust, promotes transparency and accountability.	✓	✓	✓	✓	4
	Average Count					3.5

Management committed through continuous implementation of monitoring and evaluation and use of findings was prevalent in three of four case studies. In the literature it is mentioned that a manager's commitment to improved operational and strategic decision making in an organisation through constant M&E and use of findings is key to the success of an M&E system (Cloete, et al., 2014). All four case studies indicate a cultivated M&E culture and commitment within the organisation to use findings to stimulate learning. Save the Children uses "findings and recommendations to drive programme development and quality, using accountability mechanisms to improve programme design, publishing and communicating results" (Save the Children, 2014:19). In the case of CARE International, findings at the analysis stage

are used to develop and finalise project parameters prior to implementation. Likewise, Grassroot Soccer mentioned that “it remains committed to institutionalising M&E within its organisational culture, and to use findings to influence broader sectors” (Grassroot Soccer, 2016).

Second, management performing key tasks within the organisation was also expressed in all four case studies. As mentioned in the literature, a successful M&E system demands some key managerial task to be performed (Cloete, et al., 2014). The promotion of accountability and transparency was most prevalent in managerial tasks in all four case studies. Save the Children, CARE International, Grassroot Soccer and Blacksach case studies made strong reference to implementing monitoring and evaluation systems designed to be transparent and accountable.

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

The second research objective pursued during this study was to document the M&E systems of multiples case studies, and to systematically and objectively compare how these systems are implemented and used in practice within the NGOs. To come closer to finding an answer to the research question, a conceptual model was created that would be tested in practice with qualitative and quantitative content analysis. First, a literature review was carried out to construct a conceptual framework that identified components of an effective M&E system. In total, 11 components with 23 considerations were retrieved from the literature and classified into two categories to enhance the comprehensibility of the conceptual framework. A combination of accidental and quota sampling was adopted for the selection of the multiple studies used to test the conceptual framework in practise. Secondary information available on the selected NGOs was assessed in order to test the conceptual framework. The results of the multiple case studies were then compared in order to construct the revised framework.

According to the findings from the assessment criteria used on the multiple case studies, 11 components and 19 considerations rated high (3-4) and only a few rated lower (0-2), namely routinely reviews of the M&E policy document, extent to which a learning environment was created with stakeholders, the reporting documents and

processes being timely and of good quality and the financial capacity for M&E adequate. This achieved the second research objective of this thesis which was to document M&E systems currently adopted by selected NGOs, both locally and internationally. Those considerations and components with an average of a high rating seem to be feasible in an NGO environment, while those with lower ratings are seen as not as feasible or important in a resource constrained environment.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this study is to contribute to the on-going identification of good practices for developing M&E systems within NGOs. This chapter focuses on the research methodology, including research design, settings, population, sampling, data-collection instruments, and procedures for data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations when conducting the study.

#### **4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study adopted a case study methodology as a research design in an attempt to answer the research problem. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), a research design is defined as the primary/core method that is utilised in conducting research. This method is seen as the foundation of the entire research process and ensures that the research meets its aims and objectives. “[The] case study research method can be defined as the in-depth study of one or a few events or cases in order to understand the phenomenon being investigated” (Muzinda, 2007:85). For Yin (2003) and Henning, et al. (2004), a case study design facilitates the investigation of a phenomenon that has set boundaries within its context, using a variety of data sources. This ensures that the topic under enquiry is not explored through one lens, but rather through diverse lenses that allow for several aspects of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

According to Zucker (2009) and Henning, et al. (2004) a case study design values the importance of the subjective creation of meaning by human beings although it also appreciates and acknowledges the availability of objectivity. One of the benefits of using a case study design is that it allows for close cooperation between the researcher and the participant, as it allows participants to tell their stories and express their views on the topic whilst the researcher listens and acquires a better

understanding of the participants' experiences and actions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Yin (2003) notes that when a study consists of more than a single case then a multiple-case study is required. This will allow the researcher to analyse the experiences within each setting and across several settings. A case study design offers a broad and dynamic approach for understanding similarities and differences between numerous cases under study.

However, case study design has been criticised for lacking an orderly and logical way of handling data. It is seen to generalise its findings based on theoretical assumptions instead of on the populations under study (Zucker, 2009). Also, for case study design to be effectively employed it is a prerequisite for the researcher to be well equipped with skills, such as flexibility, ability to adapt to any environment, as well as questioning and attentive listening in order for information to be accurately gathered (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this study, these drawbacks were avoided through the researcher gaining a broad theoretical understanding of the M&E field under study prior to collecting data, being an active listener and easily adapting to any contexts that were suitable for participants during data collection. The case study design allowed the researcher to explore, investigate and unpack the meanings attached to various M&E experiences of the selected NGO.

#### **4.3 DATA-COLLECTION METHODS**

In September 2017, the researcher contacted non-governmental organisations with functioning monitoring and evaluation system in place, based in the Western Cape. From the organisations that were contacted, only one replied to the research invite and expressed an interest in participating in the study. This NGO was subsequently selected as the case study. The researcher scheduled a phone call with the director and founder to share the objective of the study and then requested to use Earthchild as the main case study. Once permission was obtained from the director, the researcher was referred to the project coordinator who is responsible for conducting M&E of their project/programme. A follow-up meeting was arranged with the project coordinator in Khayelitsha and this meeting was used to explain the research objective and for the project coordinator to brief the researcher on the NGO, as well as discuss

the NGO's monitoring and evaluation system. The research interview took place in May 2018 the research collected direct observations, interviews and content analysis.

#### **4.3.1 Observations and Conversations**

According to Kumar (2005:119), "... observation is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place". He further notes that observation is the most appropriate method of data collection to learn about interaction in a group, as well as the behavioural and personality characteristics of an individual. Given the fact that observation takes place within the natural setting where an action is happening, it is important that this research makes use of observation. Observation helped the researcher to gather data that was neither verbal nor written. The process of observation also helped to obtain information that could not be elicited through questioning. Observing a phenomenon in its natural setting gave an in-depth and a more thorough understanding of the various dynamics within the community and NGO.

Initial data was collected from conversations with the director and founder and then included project coordinators at the non-governmental organisation to learn about the goals of the organisation and programs and assistance being offered. This data was helpful to understand the workings of the organisation, as well as to learn about the project/programme monitoring, evaluation and reporting activities.

#### **4.3.2 Key Informant Interviews**

According to Blanche, et al. (2006), interviews are purposeful conversations intended to get specific information from participants concerning the subject of the research. They usually consist of open-ended and predefined questions that cover the subject area. The researcher used semi-structured questionnaires in the form of a research schedule (Annexure A) to gather information from the two key informants. The researcher purposefully interviewed the programme coordinator and director as they both had a good understanding of M&E.



The interviews were voice recorded at the centre at which the project coordinator works. This location was selected to help increase comfort levels. During the interviews, the researcher took notes for follow-up questions. After the interviews, the researcher completed the notes and included this with the transcribed data, noting material that needed to be addressed during follow-up interviews. The researcher then translated and transcribed the recordings. The recordings were listened to a second time to check for accuracy and to make corrections.

#### **4.3.3 Content Analysis**

According to Herring (2004), content analysis is social science methodology widely concerned with “the systematic, objective and quantitative description of content of communication”. As Weare and Lin (2000) mention, this ultimately means that websites and webpages, as media of communication themselves, are *prima facie* to content analysis. The researcher analysed the Earthchild Project website and web-based social network to complement collected information and to gather data on the mission and vision of the organisation, information on the different programmes being implemented, organisational structure and to understand the different stakeholders involved with the Earthchild Project.

#### **4.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

The researcher triangulated data collected from observation/conversation notes, web-based content and interview transcripts. This was in order to provide evidence of the organisation’s M&E methodology and identify the key elements of their M&E system. The data analysis followed Creswell’s (2008) six-step process. The first step was to organise and prepare the data for analysis, which includes transcribing interviews, scanning materials and sorting/arranging data by various subjects. The second was to read through the data to obtain a general sense of the information and reflect on its meaning while taking notes. The third step was to begin an analysis using a coding process. This required taking the data, segmenting it and labelling the categories with proper terminology. The fourth step involved generating a description of the setting, people, and categories for analysis through the coding process. For the case study, the case and its context were described. The fifth step was to use the interview data to deliver the findings of the analysis. Direct interpretation was used while developing naturalistic generalisations. The final step was to produce a comprehensive narrative

of the case study, in which the researcher addressed the connections between study objectives and key concepts.

#### **4.5 VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS**

Validity is defined as the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, which are based on the research results. In other words, validity is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomena under study (Golafshani, 2003). Validity is also the degree to which a test actually measures what it purports to measure (Riege, 2003). The researcher determined the instrument's content and construct validity through the help of expert judgment (the supervisor), who assessed the instrument to define if it answered the phenomenon under study. The researcher removed bias in the research instrument by constructing it in line with the objectives of the study.

#### **4.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The researcher has an obligation to respect and protect the rights, needs, values, privacy and dignity of participants. The researcher complied with the ethics principles required by academics at the University of Stellenbosch.

Organisational permission was acquired through a letter requesting permission to conduct a study that was sent to the NGO. The following principles of ethical research were applied during the research process:

- An information sheet was given to participants explaining the purpose of the study, data-collection procedures, issues of confidentiality, as well as risks and benefits. Participants were informed of their rights and voluntary participation.
- Informed consent: the purpose of the study was explained verbally and in writing to the participants. Key informant interview confidentiality binding forms were used to obtain participants' consent to ensure the confidentiality of the group.
- Confidentiality: personal information and all data obtained was and will be kept confidential.

- Scientific integrity: ethical clearance was obtained from the university. A researcher liaised with the participants to set up a convenient time to schedule interviews.

All data and transcriptions were stored in a safe database on a personal laptop that requires a password. Only the researcher and supervisor have access to this. All records of the data from audiotapes and transcripts will be disposed of once the study is complete.

#### **4.7 LIMITATIONS**

The research encountered a few challenges during and after interviews. The scheduling of research interviews was found to be challenging. Due to time constraints it was not possible to schedule face-to face interview sessions with all programme managers and the director. Despite this, a one-on-one interview was possible with one programme manager, which was conducted at their workplace. A questionnaire was emailed to the director; however, it took roughly two weeks to receive a response.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **CASE STUDY RESULTS OF THE EARTHCHILD PROJECT NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the findings and analyses of the research conducted on the implementation of the Earthchild Project M&E system. The chapter begins with a background of the organisation, discussing the programmes that are implemented, stating its mission, vision goals and discussing the various stakeholders involved in the organisation. The chapter then presents and discusses the M&E system using the effective M&E system conceptual framework, as revised Chapter 3, as the main instrument to interpret the results. In conclusion, the chapter provides a summary of the findings.

#### **5.2 BACKGROUND OF EARTHCHILD PROJECT CASE STUDY**

Earthchild Project is a non-profit organisation that focuses on the holistic development of children, teachers and schools in disadvantaged areas. It was established in 2007 by Janna Kretzmar and is based in the Western Cape. Earthchild Project began its work with eight schools in two townships in Cape Town, namely Khayelitsha and Lavender Hill (Earthchild Project, 2018).

Earthchild Project established a holistic approach to education that focuses on health and wellness, life skills and the environment through different programmes integrated with the school's curriculum. This is mainly implemented through yoga and meditation, as well as organic gardening and environmental education (Earthchild Project, 2018).

##### **5.2.1 Overview of Mission, Vision and Goal**

Earthchild Project's vision, as outlined on its website states:

“Earthchild Project has a vision of a world where individuals are inspired to connect with themselves, each other and the environment. Through increasing consciousness, we will co-create this sense of Ubuntu” (Earthchild Project, 2018).

The mission of Earthchild Project is outlined as follows:

“Our mission is to create meaningful and sustainable change by providing practical skills in how to live a holistic, balanced lifestyle with a focus on self-awareness, health and the environment” (Earthchild Project, 2018).

The same website states that ECP’s main goal is to inspire a new generation of healthy, confident and conscious young leaders. This is done through working with children and teachers to provide educational programmes that focus on the environment, health and life-skills. The work of the organisation intends to teach children and educators practical skills, such as yoga, mindfulness and organic gardening (Earthchild Project, 2018).

### 5.2.2 Earthchild Project’s Programmes

The work of Earthchild Project is intended to empower target groups by providing them with practical life-skills that will enable them to develop their potential to the fullest. To achieve its broad goals, the organisation designed and implements six programmes, briefly discussed below (Earthchild Project, 2018).

**Living classrooms** comprise “Yoga & Lifeskills”, “Worm Farming & Container Gardening” and “Eco Outings”, which provide education in the schools. The overall aim of the programme is to equip children with practical life-skills and knowledge, as well as to teach them about the environment.

**Afterschool clubs** comprise the “Little Yogis Club” and the “Eco-Warriors Club”, which aligns with the ECP’s aim of equipping children with practical skills. The Eco Warriors Club specifically aims to integrate life skills, leadership and environmental education in a manner that is experiential and engaging.

The holiday programme comprises of the **Leadership Training Holiday Programmes** and **September Holiday Leadership Programme**, which take place

on a yearly basis. The Holiday Leadership Programme is a one week session that takes place during the April and June school holidays and is attended by a group of 20 children from Grade 7. The September Holiday Programme takes a group of 100 children to attend five days of learning.

The **Alumni Programme** was established for young participants who graduated and return to the Earthchild Project to get involved. The aim of the programme is to provide alumni's with skills and knowledge of project management, media and marketing and administration, amongst other areas.

Finally, the **Teachers' Wellness Convention** is a one day event, aimed at empowering 300 teachers with stress management skills and tools to help them improve their health and well-being.

The programmes discussed above are of particular relevance to this study as it focuses on the assessment of purpose and scope (coverage of the programmes) of the monitoring system within Earthchild Project.

### 5.2.3 Organisational Structure

The structural arrangement (Annexure B) consists of the director (1), yoga programme coordinators (2), environmental programme coordinators (2) with similar placement and a communications manager (1). Each focus community and school have one coordinator responsible for the yoga programme and one for environmental programmes (Earthchild Project, 2018).

It can be seen from the attached organogram (Annexure B) that an M&E person(s) is not featured nor is the function included. However, this does not suggest that M&E is not being performed by Earthchild Project. It was found that an operation manager has been newly appointed and will soon undertake all the M&E and related functions that were previously performed by staff members.

### **5.2.4 Stakeholders in Earthchild Project**

Earthchild Project's programmes are funded by various external donors, as well as a board of trustees. There was a total amount of seventeen external donors supporting the organisation in the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 (Earthchild Project, 2018). The composition of the external donors includes foundations, other non-profit organisations and companies in different industries, such as tourism, business services, wholesale and retail trade (Earthchild Project, 2018).

The organisation has a couple of project ambassadors who have given support in many different ways, including through fundraising and donations. The ambassadors have also made a commitment to take part in some of the programme activities and to offer their services and expertise (Earthchild Project, 2018).

The programme's beneficiaries are children attending public school in two focus areas: Lavender Hill and Khayelitsha. Teachers are also involved in some of the programme activities, for instance one of the living classroom programme activities requires teachers and children to take responsibility for feeding the worms and watering the gardens. Some programmes are run by the Earthchild Project staff, a team of volunteers or a group of young facilitators (Earthchild Project, 2018). These various stakeholders are relevant to the study as the literature review emphasises the public and stakeholder's participation as a critical component of an effective M&E system.

## **5.3 KEY FINDINGS OF THE COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM**

Key components of an effective M&E system emerged from the literature review and provide a means to assess the institutionalisation of these systems. In Chapter 3, the established components were revised by empirically validating the elements through a multiple case study. The results of the multiple cases were used to revise the conceptual framework to consist of the key components of an effective M&E system specially tailored for NGOs. The final list of institutional components includes:

- A clear purpose and scope: Why is an M&E system needed and how comprehensive it is?

- Identification of key stakeholder informational needs and expectations: Who are the key stakeholders? What information do they need to effectively participate in the initiative?
- A plan for information gathering and analysis: How will information be regathered and how to organise it?
- A plan for critical events and process reflection: How to use information to make improvements.
- A plan for quality communication and reporting: How and to whom to communicate information.
- A plan for the necessary capacities and conditions for M&E: What is needed to ensure the M&E system actually works?
- Documented policy and guidelines and continuous review of the policy: Is there adequate documentation for an M&E system? Are they routinely verified?
- Participation in the M&E system: To what extent does M&E promote external participation/public and stakeholder participation?
- Capacitated and motivated staff: Are adequate capacity building interventions and training available to staff?
- Committed leadership to generate and use M&E information: To what extent does leadership and management support the generation and utilisation of M&E information?
- Attentive management to implement and maintain the system: To what extent is management committed to constant monitoring and evaluation and use of findings?

The eleven components and subcomponents in Chapter 3 informed the development of the interview questions to gauge the informant's perception of ECP's current M&E system. The reframed question focussed on whether Earthchild Project adheres to the best practise requirements of an effective M&E system.

A research schedule (Annexure A) was developed and used as an instrument to collect data from the selected informants. As mentioned in Chapter 2, informants were



purposefully elected; namely, the director and programmer coordinator who were M&E practitioners within ECP.

The qualitative methods of data collection used for this study include: (i) in-depth, open-ended interviews; and (ii) observation/conversations and content analysis on website content.

### **5.3.1 Purpose and Scope**

Responding to the questionnaire, the respondents indicated that monitoring and evaluation is practised in order to understand the impact of the organisation and its programmes. Respondent One points out that the organisation has been operating for more than ten years. They believe that they have created some impact over the years and have an interest in assessing the impact through the use of monitoring and evaluation. Respondent Two reiterates this viewpoint and explains that monitoring and evaluation is undertaken to inform the donors and board of the progress of the programmes and whether or not the organisation has been successful in achieving the set outcomes, as well as the desired impact. The conclusion of this assessment is that monitoring and evaluation is a tool used by the ECP to assess the performance and impact of the organisation's programmes. It was however noted that respondents made no mention of the M&E scope.

### **5.3.2 Identifying Performance Questions, Information Needs and Indicators**

It was indicated in Chapter 3 that the key focus of this component is to identify stakeholders and to clarify their information needs. Respondent One indicates that the organisation's stakeholders comprise the board, its funders and the media, and friends and family who support the organisation. Elaborating on the stakeholders and information needs, Respondent Two explains that the main stakeholders they report to are the donors and board. The donors ask for M&E in order to have feedback about the impact of the programmes they are supporting. Stakeholders are interested in the overall number of beneficiaries participating in the programmes, their attendance rates and how the programme measures whether it is having the intended outcomes. Board

members ask for M&E information as a tool to keep up to date with the progress of the programmes (Respondent Two, 2018).

The organisation's website (Earthchild Project, 2018) indicates a total amount of seventeen external donors supporting the organisation in 2016, 2017 and 2018. The composition of the external donors includes foundations, other non-profit organisations and companies in different industries, such as tourism, business services, wholesale and retail trade. There are a couple of project ambassadors who give support on a continuous basis in many different ways, including through fundraising, donations, a commitment to take part in some programme activities and by offering services and expertise (Earthchild Project, 2018). Overall, the assessment found that there is an understanding amongst respondents about who the main stakeholders are and their information needs.

#### **5.3.4 Plan for Information Gathering and Analysis**

Respondent One indicates various personnel as being involved in the handling of data that is captured and analysed using the tool. Programme coordinators usually collect data and conduct a regular trend analysis of performance indicators to inform decision making at programme level. In some cases, junior staff members are tasked with assisting in collecting data and providing it to the programme coordinator for further analysis (Respondent One, 2018). In the programme reports, the director consolidates all the collected data and prepares a report to the donors and board (Respondent Two, 2018).

The information system includes questions converted into a digital format that is readily available to the field worker (Respondent One, 2018). After every session with the beneficiaries the field worker is able to download and conduct the survey using a mobile device. They then complete the required information and upload it to the cloud or drive. The collected data is immediately available for analysis and often displayed in a graph form (Respondent One, 2018).

The information submitted by the director to different stakeholders informs on the performance of the programmes and the organisation as whole in the form of quarterly and annual reports. It is worth observing that donors and partners use this information

to make funding decisions and decisions on whether some portions of the programme need changing or improvement. Decisions made by these external partners and donors are then communicated through the managing director and disseminated back into the organisation (Respondent Two, 2018).

The frequency of data collection is after every session with the beneficiaries. After the programme coordinator uploads the completed survey to the cloud or onto the drive, it is immediately available for analysis (Respondent One, 2018).

The process of data collection is mainly done by programme staff members and was previously performed by an external person, such as an M&E consultant. The employment of an external M&E consult was temporary and encouraged by some donors in an effort improve the M&E process (Respondent Two, 2018).

### **5.3.5 Plan Critical Reflection Processes and Events**

There was not much forthcoming information in this area, although the organisation does have a critical reflection process and events. Elaborating on this, Respondent One indicates that the organisation has been exploratory and experimental in its application of monitoring and evaluation. The practise of critically reflecting on what the programme has achieved or lessons to be learned has not been implemented in their M&E processes.

### **5.3.6 Plan for Communication and Reporting**

Respondent Two explains that monthly data reporting is done as an opportunity for programme coordinators to discuss progress on activities carried out during the month, upcoming activities for the next month and to share critical issues with management.

It is also observed that annual reporting is completed by the director as a means to summarise achievements against strategic objectives; to report on progress against the results indicators and outcomes; and, lastly, as an opportunity to receive partners. It is worth noting that the managing director reviews the data for quality assurance prior to release of the results from the programme team (Respondent Two, 2018).

Programme results are frequently shared with donors, partner organisations and the board of trustees. In some cases, programme coordinators voluntarily informally communicate results with beneficiaries during community meetings or engagement

sessions (Respondent One, 2018). It is also noted that the reporting of results to partners is presented by the Director during a partner meeting.

### **5.3.7 Plan for Necessary Capacities and Conditions for Monitoring and Evaluation**

The findings presented in this section encompass the respondents' perception of the adequacy of their human capacity, structures and processes, information management systems (MIS) and financial capacity. Respondent Two indicates that there is no dedicated human resources team charged with the responsibility of M&E within the organisation. It was found that plans have been made to appoint a new operational manager. A content analysis of the Earthchild Project vacancy indicates that the operational manager will be responsible for reporting directly to the board and organising the work of all organisational operations, as well as ensuring smooth operational coherence and a high standard of functioning within finance, human resources, administration, programme delivery, monitoring and evaluation, and day-to-day operations (Earthchild Project, 2018).

In terms of the structure and process, the organisation's organogram is documented and available on the internet in the public domain (<http://earthchildproject.org/team/>). The content analysis shows that the organisation has a total of six staff members. Staff members consist of the director, programme managers, communications manager and two school programme coordinators. With regards to processes, Respondent One indicates that both school programme coordinators and managers are responsible for undertaking M&E activities and the reporting is done by the director.

In terms of MIS, Respondent One indicates that the ECP mobile data-collection system is used for monitoring and evaluating, especially for data collection. As mentioned by the respondent, the MIS can be accessed from other information technology tools, such as phones and tablets (hardware) and different programs (software) to gather data. It was also revealed that the cloud-based monitoring and evaluation database allows coordinators to perform secure storage, robust analysis, real-time feedback and efficient data entry.

### **5.3.8 Documented Policy, Guidelines and its Continuous Review**

The question posed to respondents sought to assess whether there is adequate documentation for the monitoring and evaluation system. Respondent Two indicates that Earthchild Project has no clear M&E policies and procedures guiding the implementation of these activities; however, this issue is high on the agenda for next year. There is not much information forthcoming in this area. Earthchild Project has operational documents that inform M&E activities, but not M&E guidelines and plans for the organisation as a whole. The researcher could not attain documentation to further elaborate on other documents used by the organisation.

### **5.3.9 Capacitated, Motivated Staff to Operate the System**

The capacitation assessment seeks to gauge the extent to which management gives staff training and encouragement to do M&E. Under this component, it is observed that both the managing director and programme coordinators have no prior experience in M&E and are not well versed in monitoring and evaluation practises. It was also revealed that the organisation has provided staff with some form of orientation on monitoring and evaluation, specifically on the purpose of M&E, data collection, collation, analysis and reporting, amongst other things. However, a written procedure does not exist for orienting new staff on the M&E system in case of staff turnover.

On the matter of training and capacity, Respondent One reveals that staff members have not received capacity building and training. Respondent Two reveals that the lack of capacity building reflects the organisation's lack of funding. It is noted that human capacity and development and training in particular is highlighted as essential for all staff, including managers and director, for the monitoring and evaluation of programme performance. It was found that there is an overall lack of skills set and capacity building amongst personnel to ensure optimal functioning of the M&E system.

### **5.3.10 Participation in the Monitoring and Evaluation System**

Responding to questions around the participation of communities (Lavender Hill and Khayelitsha) and ECP programme staff members in the M&E processes, Respondent One (2018) indicates that the monitoring and evaluation adopted by the organisation requires the participation of programme staff and main stakeholders, including donors, boards and partner organisations. The respondent also mentions that, in some cases,

the process of data collection and verification calls for the participation of other stakeholders, for instances teachers, alumni and youth volunteers. It was found that some programme coordinators attend school meetings to inform other stakeholders of the programme's impact and to receive feedback. It is worth noting that it is not a reporting requirement for coordinators have meetings and hold dialogue with other stakeholders, it is done voluntarily or on request (Respondent One, 2018).

The findings of the study establish that participation in the M&E process does not include all stakeholders (Respondent One, 2018). The fact that the community and parents are not at all involved undermines stakeholder participation as a means to increase accountability to programme beneficiaries, and also undermines the legitimacy of decision-making to focus on the improvement needs of the beneficiaries.

### **5.3.11 Committed Leadership to Generate and Use Information**

Respondent One indicates that data is collected against all programme indicators, which implies that all information required by management is generated and available to help the manager gauge whether the designed programmes are performing well or underperforming. It was mentioned the programme reports document any reasons for poor performance (e.g. not achieving set targets), as well as over performance (Respondent Two, 2018). However, it was observed that when performance issues arise, a follow up is not conducted with the responsible programme coordinator. One of the respondents mentioned that “we’ve been trying all sorts of different things, I don’t think we sit down and reflect on what we’ve done” (Respondent One, 2018).

It was also observed that management has a certain level of commitment to using the information generated by the M&E system. However, it was found that programme managers are not provided with the capacity and skills to best use M&E information (Respondent One, 2018; Respondent Two, 2018). Elaborating on the specific management challenges around insufficient capacity, Respondent Two explains that “even when we have collected data we have not had the capacity or skills to collate and use this information effectively”.

**The conclusion of this assessment is that management is committed, however lacks the capacity to use M&E information effectively. Recommendations on this component are provided in the next chapter.**

### **5.3.12 Attentive Management to Implement and Maintain the System**

Respondent Two indicates that in the past management tried to temporarily appoint an external consultant to assist staff members with the implementation of M&E (Respondent Two, 2018). Management is also investing in the improvement of the organisation's capacity through the appointment of an operation manager. Elaborating on management's commitment to improving M&E-related capacity, Respondent Two explains that "the intention with the new Ops Manager would be to clarify our intended outcomes and then develop structure and systems for M&E that are relevant and useful internally as well as that can be used externally for reporting purposes". The overall results of management's commitment to implement and maintain the M&E assessment shows insufficient support and investment from ECP's management.

## **5.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

This chapter presents a summary of results flowing from the research fieldwork. The results were assessed against the objectives of the research mentioned in Chapter 1. The overall assessment of the establishment of an M&E system against the 11 components resulted in the following observations:

Understanding of purpose and scope: The respondents could reasonably explain the concept and purpose of M&E.

Identifying performance questions, information needs and indicators: The respondents seem to understand the stakeholders they report to and the information expectations.

Information gathering and analysis: Respondents understood the process of data-collection and could articulate who is responsible for this data collection and analysis.

Critical reflection processes and events: It was found that the organisation does not have critical reflection events.

Communication and reporting: The respondents could identify and describe reporting mechanisms. It was found that internal reporting occurs within the organisation and that findings are formally reported to the donors and board. Other stakeholders, such as the community, parents and teachers are informally reported to. It was unclear whether reports are expected quarterly, monthly or annually.

Necessary condition and capacity for M&E: Respondents perceived the MIS to be working well, allowing them to collect the required data. However, they reported to have insufficient human and financial resources, as well as inadequate structures and processes in place.

Documentation: Respondents reported to not have proper M&E policies and procedures in place.

Capacity and motivation to carry out M&E: Respondents perceived a lack of capacity building and skills training as their weakness.

Participation in the M&E system: Respondents perceived the process of monitoring and evaluation to be inclusive of implementers and coordinators, although to not include other stakeholders, including parents and the community at large.

Committed leadership to generate and use information: Respondents confirmed management's commitment to drive the M&E and use information to improve the programme's impact. It was found that management uses M&E results for decision-making purposes.

Attentive management to implement and maintain the system: Respondents could confirm management's commitment to the continuous implementation of M&E. It was found that the appointment of an M&E person is one of management's efforts to renew and improve M&E practises.

Overall, the findings of the assessment on the M&E system show that respondents perceive the following to be in place: purpose and scope, clear understanding of what to monitor and evaluate, information gathering and analysis strategy, communication and reporting mechanism, management information system (MIS) and committed leadership to use M&E information, and attentive management to implementing and maintaining the system.



The overall finding is that some elements of an M&E system are in place and parts of this system need attention to contribute towards Earthchild Project's programme implementation performance and impact. The next chapter (Chapter 6) presents the conclusion and recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 6:**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents conclusions and recommendations primarily based on the objectives of the study and the research questions. The aim of the research is to analyse and describe the components of the M&E system, alternative practices adopted in the NGO sector and to assess the M&E system of the Earthchild Project in terms of the components of an effective M&E system. Five main objectives framed this study:

- Examine what constitutes an effective M&E system and highlight its key components.
- Present a conceptual framework that serves as a useful diagnostic aid.
- Document M&E systems currently adopted by selected NGOs and present best practises.
- Evaluate the M&E system within Earthchild Project against the developed conceptual framework.
- Present findings and recommendation based on the finding of the case study.

#### **6.2 ESTABLISHING PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

The aim of establishing M&E purpose and scope is to have clear understanding as to “why” and “how” monitoring and evaluation is needed within the organisation. Having such clarity also helps to decide on issues such as information need, information type (qualitative, quantitative or both), number of indicators to track, frequency and budget.

From the information gathered from observation and the respondents of this study, it was established that an M&E system is partially established within the Earthchild Project. Respondents were clear on the reasons for undertaking monitoring and evaluation, which were programme performance and impact. It was, however, found that the M&E scope is not defined nor understood by all staff members.

This study concludes that the establishment of Earthchild Project does not yet meet this institutional requirement. It is recommended that the system be re-established to include the scope of M&E detailing scale and complexity (the number and type of outcomes they seek to achieve).

In addition, with reference to best practice in terms of establishing a M&E purpose, as indicated in Chapter 3, it is recommended that efforts be made to incorporate effective learning into Earthchild Project's M&E structure, as well as to establish data-collection and analysis processes that support learning. Learning will not only enable ECP to improve their accountability toward donors, but it will also assist the organisation to understand and leverage their organisational strengths in order to successfully make the best use of their limited resources. With reference to Chapter 2, it is recommended that Earthchild Project revisit its M&E purpose and ensure that this aligns with the approved programme budget and resources.

### **6.3 IDENTIFYING STAKEHOLDER INFORMATION NEEDS AND INDICATORS**

Having a clear understanding of the stakeholder's information needs and expectations helps to gain understanding, as well as increase utility and ownership of the M&E information. From the information gathered from respondents of this study it is clear that the M&E information needs and expectations of ECP are primarily based on the key stakeholders, namely project staff, donors and the board. Respondents have a clear understanding as to what M&E information key stakeholders need. Respondents mention that their M&E system addresses quantitative information needs and indicators, such as number of beneficiaries, attendance rates and progress towards intended outcomes.

The overall conclusion is that Earthchild Project meets the requirements. It is, however, observed that M&E did not take into consideration the information needs of all stakeholders and was merely prioritising a selected few. The inclusion of all internal and external stakeholders, as well as ensuring that their information needs are identified and met, is indicated as a best practise in Chapter 3.

To address this, it is recommended that an external stakeholder's assessment be conducted by ECP to identify who its key stakeholders are, as well as their information

needs. In addition, it is best to coordinate information expectations and requirements to reduce the burden on programme implementation.

#### **6.4 PLAN FOR INFORMATION GATHERING AND ANALYSIS**

The aim of having a plan for information gathering and analysis is to establish a clear understanding of methods for data collection, frequency of analysis, synthesis and recording, as well as to determine roles and responsibilities of the person(s) involved in data collection and analysis.

Respondents had a clear understanding of the organisation's data-collection methodology and tools. However, there is no documentation guiding the process of data collection. It is therefore recommended that a guideline be developed to guide all persons involved in M&E and also for training purposes.

It was also found that respondents understood the type of information required by the identified key stakeholders. Respondents mentioned that donors require mostly quantitative information, such as the number of beneficiaries attending the programmes, as well as the attendance rate and impact created by the programme. As such, other key stakeholders are not included in the process of data collection.

With regards to the list of persons responsible for collecting data, it was found that all staff members, including junior staff, are responsible for the collection of data. Respondents mention that data is collected on a weekly basis and reviewed monthly. The verification and consolidation of data is mainly the director's responsibility.

The best practise of information gathering and analysis indicated in Chapter 3, mentions that the core elements of this component are defining the methodologies and tools for data collection, listing of key persons involved in data collection, scheduling of frequency of information collection and the involvement of all stakeholders in data collection and processing.

The overall conclusion is that Earthchild Project meets most of the information and data analysis requirements; however, a particular area that needs attention is the exclusion of other key stakeholders (community and parents) in the process of data gathering and analysis. This area is fundamental for ECP to thoroughly evaluate the

impact of their programmes. At present, the tools and list of indicators are insufficient for Earthchild Project to understand the extent of its impact. As such, it is recommended that ECP revise the list of indicators and implement data-collection methodologies and tools that are a mix of participatory and conventional approaches.

Based on the best practices mentioned in Chapter 3, it is recommended that a participatory approach be undertaken to ensure that all stakeholders are included in the process of collecting data. With reference to Chapter 2, it is recommended that Earthchild Project establish a complaints and feedback mechanism that will provide included stakeholders with the opportunity to voice their opinions. This will provide valuable insight and data for monitoring and evaluation of the on-going programme.

## **6.5 PLAN CRITICAL REFLECTION AND PROCESSES**

Critical reflection events and processes help transform collected information into valuable knowledge. By doing this, project management decisions will likely build on lessons learned as the programme progresses.

The conclusion drawn from this component is that critical reflection and events are not an established part of Earthchild Project's M&E system. Respondents mentioned that the ECP continuously implements M&E and does not make time to reflect on the programmes, as well as what the collected information has revealed about the programmes. In line with the best practise of implementing critical reflection mentioned in Chapter 3, it is recommended that efforts are made to conduct critical events (such as quarterly reflection meetings) and regular 'feedback meetings' are held to discuss M&E findings and to establish how to best improve programme performance. In addition, it is also best practise to encourage participation of all stakeholders. This is done to provide an opportunity for all team members and other relevant community members, parents and partner NGOs to contribute to reflection and analysis of progress and achievements, decision making and planning of activities.

## 6.6 PLAN FOR QUALITY COMMUNICATION AND REPORTING

The importance of planning for communication and reporting is to outline communication strategies and reporting mechanisms used in informing M&E results/findings to stakeholders. Chapters two and three indicate the importance of defining and develop reporting mechanisms in order to communicate findings with donors. The study concludes that Earthchild Project meets this component's requirements of defining the reporting mechanism, reporting schedule and having reports that are aligned to the identified stakeholder needs. Essential reporting mechanisms were defined; however, it is unclear whether they were defined during the project proposal. It is observed that there was a clear understanding as to who received the report and how often reporting is done. It is also clear that reporting was conducted to the donors and funding agencies for accountability reasons. However, project reporting should include communicating M&E findings with other stakeholders and for different reasons. One respondent indicates that reporting to other stakeholders, for example parents and teachers, is done informally and voluntarily as it is not a requirement.

To address the assumption of the project proposal not being defined, it is recommended that the reporting mechanism needs to be reviewed for improvements. It needs to include a detailed communication strategy that informs the type of reporting tool to be used for all stakeholders. In addition, communication efforts seeking feedback on findings and discussion on actions to be taken need to be developed. With regard to the findings on the exclusion of other stakeholders, it is recommended that a list of these stakeholders be established, their information needs identified, and reporting schedule and format need to be developed. It is also crucial to organise communication and discussion events with these stakeholders. It is recommended that reporting include all stakeholders. This means Earthchild Project should prepare reports for parents, teachers and the community and ensure that the reporting is tailored to their information needs.

## 6.7 PLAN FOR THE NECESSARY CONDITIONS AND CAPACITIES

The importance of this component is to outline and ensure that M&E has adequate resources and capacities, such as human resources, financial and management information systems (MIS), structures and processes.

It was found from respondents that there is a shortage of M&E human resources and staff skilled in M&E within Earthchild Project. It was also observed in the organogram that there is no M&E representative. It was, however, noted that efforts have been made to alleviate some of the existing M&E human resource (HR) gaps identified within ECP. Plans have been made to appoint an operations manager who will oversee and organise all organisational operations, including HR and M&E. It is recommended that the current M&E skills of programme managers be reviewed and supported with technical training in M&E skills.

Financial capacity for M&E activities has been observed as inadequate, as there is no dedicated M&E budget to support these activities and enable the organisation to learn. It is recommended that this be addressed by ensuring that dedicated funds are set aside for M&E and for all related M&E activities.

Respondents have a fair understanding of the role they play in monitoring and evaluation. This is because the M&E role undertaken by the programme coordinators and managers is not under their job description. The organisational structure was observed in the organogram and showed no evidence of a dedicated staff for M&E. The role of the newly appointed M&E role were found to be clear, however, without documentation of the M&E role undertaken by the programme coordinator, the researcher could not observe whether there may be some overlapping or conflicting in the role and responsibilities in the M&E.

The overall conclusion of this component is that ECP's M&E system met only one requirement, which is having a management information system in place. With reference to both chapters three and two, it is recommended that plans be made to obtain dedicated funds to enable M&E activities and to appoint a well-trained staff member(s), who will be dedicated to full M&E responsibilities. Having a well-trained M&E staff member with sufficient skills and knowledge to transfer in the M&E design and implementation ensures that the system will be sustainable in the future.

## **6.8 DOCUMENTED POLICY AND GUIDELINES AND CONTINUOUS REVIEW OF THE POLICY**

The documentation of M&E policies and guidelines is fundamental to ensure that knowledge is stored and that there is a common approach within the organisation. The conclusion for this component is that there is no documented M&E plan, guidelines and operations within the ECP. It is therefore recommended for ECP to have written documentation of M&E guidelines, processes and procedures. This entails updating the current M&E framework and aligning it with the new strategic and M&E plans. The M&E plan should document all M&E procedures and processes to guide M&E practices at Earthchild Project. With reference to Chapter 2, it is recommended that all documentation be routinely reviewed to ensure that this is up-to date.

With reference to best practices in Chapter 3, it is recommended that Earthchild Project develops and documents an M&E framework to guide M&E practises in the organisation. The framework should include important elements, such as key performance indicators, data courses, methods, reporting frequency, staff responsibilities, timelines and audience analysis. In addition, the M&E framework should have a detailed data flow chart that shows any feedback mechanisms that need to be provided.

## **6.9 CAPACITATED, MOTIVATED STAFF TO OPERATE THE SYSTEM**

The aim of capacity building and motivating staff is to ensure that all personnel involved in feeding data into the M&E system has the adequate skill-set and training. This is important as the capacities of personnel directly affects the functioning of the M&E system.

In terms of M&E training and capacity training, no effort has been made by management. Respondents indicate that staff members have an average amount of M&E knowledge and no M&E skills to carry out M&E activities. It is therefore recommended that M&E training and staff development are prioritised. In addition, mentoring efforts should encourage staff so that their potential can be fully utilised.



With respect to best practises in Chapter 3, it is recommended that ECP carry out a staff review to determine the specific capacity required to inform capacity building and staff development. In the short-term, it recommended that focus can be turned to capacity building agencies like the National School of Government, local universities and other M&E technical experts within the province. The specific area needing attention is M&E technical skills.

## **6.10 PARTICIPATION IN THE M&E SYSTEM**

The promotion of external participation of the public and stakeholders in M&E processes is of importance as it improves the usefulness of M&E results, improves accuracy and enhances ownership of the programme. In this component, it is clear that the M&E process did not promote external participation of all stakeholders. It was observed that project staff and donors are the only stakeholders involved in the monitoring and evaluation, with management and donors specifically responsible for decision making. Respondents indicate that the community and parents are not hugely encouraged to participate in the monitoring and evaluation.

The study concludes that monitoring and evaluation of ECP encourages only internal stakeholder participation. It is recommended for ECP to first encourage participation of all of its stakeholders in M&E processes, particularly during the planning phase of M&E. As indicated in Chapter 2, the participation of primary stakeholders and partners is critical in the reviewing of M&E purpose and scope. Secondly, it is recommended that all staff members be capacitated on participatory philosophies and approaches. This will enable them to embrace community participation and service delivery. Adequate resources (money, personnel and materials/equipment) for M&E should be allocated for capacity building of communities and committees involved in project identification, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of community development projects.

As indicated in Chapter 3, it is best practise to allow public and stakeholder participation in M&E and decision making as this improves the accuracy and usefulness of results; promotes the feasibility and utilisation of M&E results; enhances

ownership of the project, programme or policy; expands understanding through different viewpoints; and lists the individual bias through multiple inputs.

### **6.11 COMMITTED LEADERSHIP TO GENERATE AND USE INFORMATION**

It is imperative for effective M&E establishment that understanding, support and commitment be present from leadership in the organisation. It is also regarded as a requirement that leadership uses M&E results for evidence-based decision making.

This research established that management shows some level of commitment towards the generation and use of M&E information. Especially shown is the director's commitment, support and drive to use information to inform donors who use the data for strategic insight. With reference to both chapters two and three, it is recommended that leadership and management develop a supportive culture. Leaders can play a role in supporting evaluative thinking in their organisation and building an evaluative culture wherein critical reflection and learning is encouraged. Improving the use of M&E information requires the development of a supportive culture by leadership. It is also recommended that management incorporates feedback from stakeholders once feedback mechanisms are developed as recommended.

### **6.12 ATTENTIVE MANAGEMENT TO IMPLEMENT AND MAINTAIN THE M&E SYSTEM**

The success of effective M&E is dependent on management's commitment to constant implementation of M&E and use of M&E findings for operational and strategic decision making. The conclusion for this component is that management has been somewhat attentive to the implementation of M&E and is invested in maintaining the M&E system. It observed that management has identified gaps in the system and taken action through the appointment of an operations manager who will improve M&E within the organisation. Respondents mentioned some of the actions taken by management in terms of improving the currently implemented M&E system.

Based on best practise, as indicated in Chapter 3, it is recommended that management makes an effort to generate learning within the organisation through the

use of M&E findings and implementation of critical reflection events. It is also recommended that management promotes transparency, accountability within the organisation, as well as encourages collaboration with the intended users of the results. This can be achieved through stakeholder engagement.

## **6.13 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented conclusions and recommendations, considering all six previous chapters, focusing on the research results and findings presented in chapters three, five and six. Essentially, the study analysed the M&E system of Earthchild Project against the conceptual framework that was tested in practise within the NGOs and revised. The conclusion of the study is that Earthchild Project has some components of an M&E system in place. These components are purpose and scope of M&E; decide to monitoring and evaluate, plan for Information gathering and organising, plan for communication and reporting, committed leadership to generate and use information, attentive management to implement and maintain system. The areas needing to be strengthened include critical reflections, necessary conditions and capacities, documented policy and continuous review of the policy participation of stakeholders, and capacitated, motivated staff to operate the system.

It is crucial for a documented M&E plan to be established and for project staff to be empowered to continue the process of building and institutionalising the M&E system. Finally, the research concludes that the institutionalisation of ECP's M&E system has the potential to be effective and sustainable if the recommendations provided in this chapter are considered and, where possible, implemented.

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## ANNEXURE A: RESEARCH SCHEDULE

### **Assessment of the components of an effective M&E system of local NGOs: A case study of Earth Child Project NGO**

Researcher Name: Lebogang Molapo

Interviewee:

Position:

Date:

1. What is the purpose of monitoring and evaluation for Earthchild Project?

.....  
.....

2. Does the organisation have written M&E policies and procedures in place?

.....

3. Who are the organisation's key stakeholders, and how does the M&E system respond to their information needs?

.....

4. Who are the organisation's key stakeholders, and how does the M&E system respond to their information needs? Are all primary stakeholders active participants in M&E processes? Does the organisation practice capacity building for stakeholders to analyse, reflect and take action?

.....

5. How is the information provided by the M&E system shared with stakeholders?

.....

6. How is data collected, collated, analysed, recorded and stored?

a. Who is involved in collecting and organising data?

.....

7. How many M&E staff does the organisation have and what are their roles and responsibilities?

.....

8. Does the organisation have incentives, training and support available to its M&E staff?

.....

9. Does the organisation have a dedicated budget for M&E?

.....

10. Do leadership support the M&E system? Can you provide examples of how this is done?

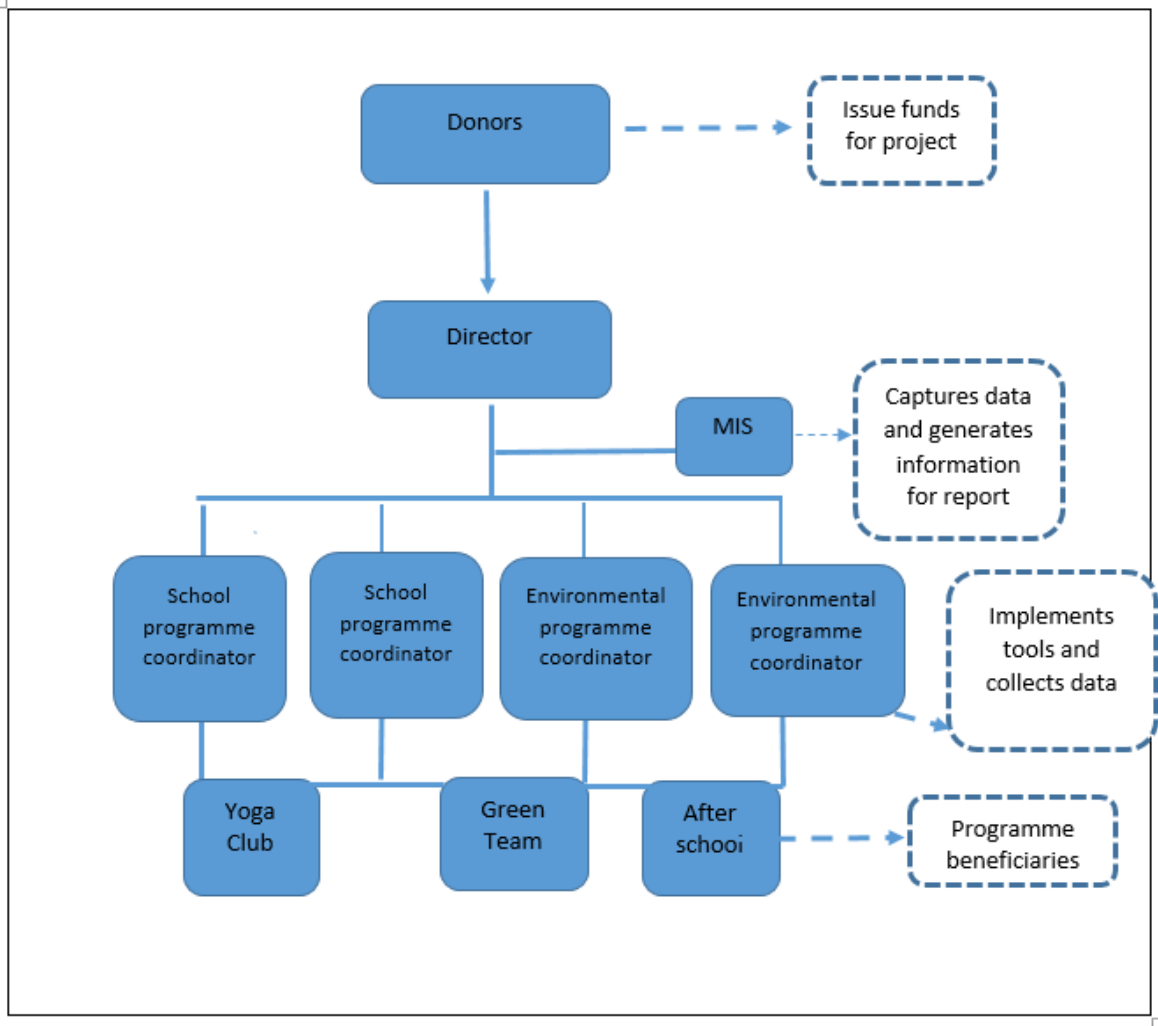
.....

11. Is information from the M&E system used in decision making? Can you provide examples of this?

.....

.....

## ANNEXURE B: ORGANOGRAM OF EARTHCHILD PROJECT



**Source:** <http://earthchildproject.org/team/>